

Art by Michael Orozco

The Beat Within



As someone who has spent the better part of his adult life locked up, I can understand how difficult it is for the public to be sympathetic to our plight. But what I fail to understand is how a society that considers itself humane and decent can give up on its children.

check out the rest of Sunman's Light's BWD piece on page 55

It is early Monday morning, and we are alone in the office. It's another sunny day in San Francisco, unusual for this time of year, and we are enjoying the quiet of an empty office before the madness begins to stir for another Beat week. But, in truth, we are already stirred by the book we have read this weekend, whose author, Dwight E. Abbott, has been writing in *The Beat Without* for years under the name SunMansLight.

Dwight was raised inside the California Youth Authority back in the 1950s, and the story he tells is one of constant violence, sexual and emotional abuse, repeated attempts at escape and inevitable recapture — a child growing up in an all-male world of insane choices. There is also a powerful love story that emerges behind the barbed wire and thick walls. That it is a love story between boys does not diminish its power, for what other love can exist when boys are locked up only with boys — another indictment of this unnatural and unjust system of control. We have never read a book like this one, which was first published in 1991 and has just been republished by AK Press. For prisoners, this book is available through AK Press (www.akpress.org/2006/items/icriedyou didntlisten, [510] 208-1700) for a cost of \$10.45 (and \$14.95 for the general public), plus \$3.75 for shipping. (In other words, prisoners would pay a total of \$14.20 per copy, and non prisoners would pay a total of \$18.70.) Everyone who pays taxes and supports this evil system should be required to read this remarkable book, whose subtitle is: "A Survivor's Exposé of the California Youth Authority."

On the Dedication page of this searing story, Dwight dedicates this book: "...to The Beat Within and its staff who have dedicated their lives to helping those in the darkness — our present-day incarcerated children. It has been a privilege to have known some of you, and to read the writings you publish each week. Thank you." We are humbled by his trust in us. Thank you, Dwight.

What follows is the introduction written by Dwight to explain how he came to write this book.

"How I Came To Write I Cried, You Didn't Listen" by Dwight E. Abbott: A time came when the administrators of the California Department of Corrections concluded "enough is enough." A decision was made to lock into solitary confinement every "know and suspected" gang member of the Aryan Brotherhood, the Mexican Mafia and the Nuestra Familia. One at a time we were extracted from our cells and our wrists cuffed to a chain that was fastened around our waist. At the small of our backs, one end of a short chain was affixed with a padlock. The other end of that same chain hung slightly above our ankles and was affixed, again, with a padlock to leg irons fastened at our ankles. We had to bend slightly backward as they pulled the chain down to reach the chain running between the leg irons.

I was one of many white, racist convicts taken to waiting airplanes and flown to other state and federal prisons located throughout the United States, and placed into cell blocks well known for their ability to isolate from the world all who entered them.

Me and three others were taken into the Oregon State Penitentiary through the back gate, and into a building that obviously was totally isolated from the rest of the prison population. Inside, the cells were dim, damp and dirty. The windows allowing outside light to enter were covered with blankets someone had hung prior to our arrival.

We were placed on the first tier, 'yard side,' in the back where four or five cells behind a grill gate were usually reserved for the most violent and disruptive inmates. The front of these cells had large iron shutters that, when shut, covered the barred window and cut out all light. Inside there was nothing more than a hole in which one was expected to use the bathroom. There was no running water, no bed, no light, and all sound was muffled. Once inside, sensory deprivation immediately began.

I could take the reader through the weeks, the months that turned into years, as my guards attempted to beat and torture me into submission. I could describe my thoughts as I hung handcuffed and naked to the bars, listened to my keepers laugh as they sprayed me full force with water from a fire hose. I could describe lying hogtied with chains, belly down upon the concrete with a canvas bag tied around my neck and covering my head, as I went days without food or water. I could tell you how it was most difficult to describe the darkness — how it sometimes would bring back my childhood monsters. But not here... I've saved that for my second book. For now, I want to give you readers some idea how this book came about, and a very brief description of the extremely difficult conditions under which it was written.

Into the third year, during which I had become convinced I no longer existed "on paper" within any prison, an ominous sound awakened me from the sleep I always had to chase. I sat up, intently listening for the sound to repeat itself. One of the iron shutters creaked slowly open. Immediately, I rolled off my thin, tattered blanket and pulled it over my head as I scooted to the far back corner of the cell preparing for the water to knock me down.

"Hey, Abbott," a guard whispered. I did not reply.

"Hey, do you want a smoke?" I remained silent.

"I'm going to leave this here," he whispered again. "I'll close the flap later." He was gone.

Once I could no longer hear his footsteps, I peeked out from under the always damp and moldy blanket. The light affixed to the ceiling directly outside my cell now shone brightly, hurting my eyes. For the first time in over two years, I was able to see the bars, the wall beyond them, the solid steel door, and the window that had been tightly sealed all that time.

Slowly, I rolled the tobacco into two cigarettes. I split each paper match up the center making four matches from the two. As I lit my cigarette, the flame allowed me to notice that my hands were nearly black with dirt from a cell not cleaned since I had been placed into it. I puffed, deeply inhaled the smoke into my lungs, and choked. I leaned against the cell wall to steady myself as the burning tobacco aroma momentarily overpowered the odor of urine, feces and mold.

Several hours had passed when I heard brass keys striking against one another. I moved to the back of my cell and stood in the shadows looking out. The sound of footsteps told me there was but one guard. He appeared at my window, but the light behind him would not allow me to see his face.

You get caught with that stuff, I could get into a lot of trouble. The guys out front send theirs.' He closed the flap, sealing me back into darkness.

So began a strange relationship between the guard and me. Five nights a week — I learned his shift was from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. — he would, quietly as he could, open the shutter, ask me how I was doing, ask me if I needed anything, and each time after receiving no response, he would drop a white paper packet onto the cell floor and walk off.

For several months this was the routine. I wanted to wash myself, shower, shave, but that would not be possible. How would it look should my daytime tormentors discover I was clean? Besides, I had no idea if I could speak. I had not said a word, not even to myself, for at least eighteen months.

One night, my guard again asked if I needed anything, and to both our surprise, I spoke, my voice deep and grating.

"How about a pencil?"

There was a moment of silence as both he and I stood stunned.

"Why do you want it?"

"Write on the walls."

"I can give it to you, but you must give it back when I close the flap."

"Okay."

Each night after, he would give to me a piece of pencil that was, possibly, two inches long. Amongst the years of graffiti, toward the front of the cell where the light shone in, I would find spots I could write poems and other thoughts that will forever remain my secret.

When I ran out of wall, I began writing on sheets of toilet paper. It began sort of like a diary — something that allowed me to express what I could not voice. Somehow, at some time — exactly when I do not know — I began forming the "diary" into a book, which would eventually become *I Cried, You Didn't Listen*. Each night the guard would pick up the pencil along with the sheets of toilet paper I had written upon. The next night he would return, and along with a small paper packet containing tobacco, two matches, and three rolling papers, he would set down sheets of toilet paper with the pencil.

One night the guard told me, "This is my last week here. What do you want me to do with the stuff you wrote?"

For a second time, I spoke to him. "I have a name and address. Would you mail it to her?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

His last night there, I returned the pencil and paper along with an address. Surprising me again, I watched him stretch his arm through the window offering his hand to me. I hesitated, reached out, and, stunned, saw my hand grasping a hand that was blacker than the years of ground-in dirt on mine.

I never learned his name — and he did keep his word by mailing off my toilet paper manuscript.

This describes how Dwight Abbott came to write *I Cried, You Didn't Listen*. To read why he wrote it, turn to page 55 in *The Beat Without* section in the back of this, another great issue of *The Beat Within*.

Which takes us to the topics in this unique and wonderful publication.

This week's 11.29 topics discussed prior to the bulk of writing in this fabulous issue were "What Is Life?"

Our second topic, "Talking To My Inner Self" — We read a lot of pieces about being true to yourself, keeping it real, etc. What we want to know is what you would talk about if you were addressing your inner self. What kinds of things would you express that you don't express to anyone else? Since you are talking to yourself, would you hold anything back? Would you ask questions and hope for answers? Have you ever had a conversation with yourself? What was it like? How did it make you feel? So, thinking about the "real you" — the person that only you know the best — tell us about a conversation you would have with your inner self.

Lastly, the topic, "Time Capsule" — If you were to open a time capsule buried fifty years ago, you might find five-cent candy bars, a record of Elvis Presley or Ray Charles, a Ford Edsel, a sexy calendar of Marilyn Monroe, a hula hoop, a black and white TV... Tonight we want you to write about the time capsule you would create today from your life experiences. What would you include so that people who open it fifty years from now can get a view of your life today. Properly prepared time capsules preserve your history and can serve as valuable reminders of one generation for another. And time capsules give individuals, families and organizations an independent voice to the future. So step up to the plate and tell *The Beat* what it is you would like to see put away/buried for the next fifty years inside your time capsule? What memorabilia, gifts, pictures, cards, trinkets, art work, letters, books, would you like to include from your personal possessions/daily life? Where would you bury it? Since you will be alive 50 years from now, would you like to be there when it's opened? Who would you like to see find your time capsule, and what do you suppose they would think? What do you think would surprise you most in 50 years about what you bury today?

OK, editorial note readers, it's that time in this editorial where we pay tribute and respect to the fabulous POW (*Piece Of the Week*) writers! Congratulations goes out to Lil' Mainy, Prepared One, Sunny D, two from Ally Bo, Marquilla, Chop, Ezekiel and Lil' Spooks all from the 150 Crew. From SFYGC we have Zoltan, BL, Casl, Reese-C-Cup, Cash and Franklin. Last two are from Jessica and Brendan who writes from Santa Cruz.

This issue goes out to none other than our old friend Dwight Abbott, and all you powerful Beat writers who so courageously share parts of your life behind bars with us in the mighty *Beat Within* each week. Your honesty about the dark journey of incarceration and the criminal justice system is priceless. We salute you all for helping yourselves (by writing your story/stories), as well as helping us readers better understand the road which lies ahead, that we are not alone (towards how we feel inside and what we are going through), and that it is fine to keep it real when expressing ourselves. Thanks Dwight.

See you next week!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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www.thebeatwithin.org

EDITOR'S NOTE	2
PIECES OF THE WEEK	4
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	8
STANDOUTS	11
SAN MATEO COUNTY	23
VOICES IN SPANISH	29
WEEKLY WRITINGS	31
ED NOTE CONTEST	44
THE BEAT WITHOUT	47



Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: Our dear friend and 150 Crew Counselor, Ms. Wadud shares with us a personal letter to herself. She reminds us that we all deal with our own insecurities, but in the end, our good qualities always outweigh the bad! Thanks Ms. Wadud. Read on y'all.

As Salaam Alakium Self

What it do?

You know you spend way too much time trippin on your weight!!

You really need to put something else in the space!!

You have more good qualities then bad ones.

You are God fearing

Loyal

Honest

Happy go lucky

And a boss!

So it doesn't matter how big you are 'cause you are The Queen of Hearts!

-Ms. Wadud, The Queen Of Hearts,
150 Crew Counselor

Summer Of 2004

I think behind a man lives in his dreams because a man can't see living in his nightmares. I been locked up for several months; I knew one day I was going to see this but sometimes when you know things you still don't pay attention. Even though I got two more days in here till my birthday, its like, in a way, I know what I'm doing, it's my choice. I'm about to be eighteen.

I got a three-year old son; his name is Romello. My baby mama, Daesha, is my heart and she's the hood. I mean it's simple: I was and still am a hood star but I think, well I know, that my son and baby momma will be the option. The reason why I know is because that's the only love I have. My mom was murdered by my father; then he set himself on fire and burnt his way to hell.

I duck and dodged 5.0 and CPS because I wanted no help but the help came from the hood - I sold bricks of purple, I went to school on the low. The one thing my momma told me to do was go to school, so I did that.

"Love you got mail," one of the staff said as they slid my mail under the door. I knew who it was. I got up, grabbed the already open envelope and sat down on my gram cracker mattress that was build on top of a brick. I smiled when I seen her and my son lip prints on top of the letter.

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow we are so moved by your story for many reasons, mainly because it was told very, very well. You have a real knack for connecting with your audience. Your words flow like a conversation, off of the pages into the readers' ear. We don't have to tell you what you need to do because you know. Do not get snatched from your son's life like your parents were from yours. It was a poor, selfish decision on your father's part that separated your parents and you; do not make selfish choices on your part to divide your family now. When we experience a lot of heartache it can have a weird effect on how we behave. Sometimes instead of making us sensitive, it makes us insensitive and careless. Wake up before it's too late cause being a hood star ain't going to be enough to make life worth while - never has been and never will be.

What Is Life In Here

Beware of entering this world,
Through these doors lies a life without control,
A life in which you're done,

A life of darkness,
A place which loneliness calls home,
A world where fear never goes too far,

A place where happiness is scared to visit,
A world of hard things and hard time,

A place covered by barbed wire, and I am not talking
about Pamela Anderson

A place were friends leave and you both happy and
sad,

A place where you're game on the court makes a
difference.

A place you came for a weekend and ended up staying
the summer,

A place where you learn how to become a criminal,
A place some have died to escape,

A place which is now my temporary home.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've done it again, Zoltan. But you know what? On one level, the most important word in this harsh, but accurate description, is the word "temporary." If every experience provides lessons for life, then you've learned yours. You should never have to repeat this temporary experience again.

Ready Or Not

I have a five-week period to get myself together;
choose a destination and mail off all my letters.
Answer all the questions that float around my mind,
a top 10 count down,
letting me know I'm out of time.

Eighteen years coming was a lot better minus ten,
now with only a month left I decide to reverse my sin. Adult
is what they call it, legal to be on my own,
but now that my time has come,
I could pass on being grown.

Will no person, place, or thing support me
in my minor set back,

my gut feeling told me no,
so I'll be prepared, ready or not.

I was the enabler for myself I'd say once upon a time,
but because I'm about to be legal
I've been specially polished to shine.

Like I said before, I'm prepared ready or not.

-Prepared One, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, this is a really intense piece—it says so much. Reaching so called adulthood before you're ready is really scary. It probably feels like the world is waiting to pounce on you, but take a deep breath and just deal with one thing at a time. Talk to a counselor or let us know if we can help, but there's no need for guns. Talk like that is really serious.

Thoughts

why am i so sad

is it because my life is so fast

wait day by day for my life to go past

wondering am i going to be killed by a person with a mask

do i want to live or do i want to die

the reason i say that is because i'm scared of life

what does it offer but pain and heartbreak

or can i make it one day

i think i'm lost in the dark

and in my head there's always one thought

"you will never make it —

the system has you and you can't shake it"

but i love my squad and they love me too

but i only mess with a chosen few

we hit licks by day and rob at night

and now we in the system for life

but we can change i think we can

if we can make a master plan

but life is hard for a young black man

trying to pass the high school exit exam

my mom loves me and i love her too

but i hate for her to see me locked up for breaking the rules

so i ask myself just what can i do

to have my life come anew

my head is telling me just do what you do and be you

which is getting money havin' broads gettin' whips

but i feel like i'm too old for this shhh

so i'm gon' keep it solid and go to college

-Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you want the ones you love in your squad to change, then you may have to be the one to show the way. Be a trailblazer, and prove to them, that it is possible to break free from the system. It's a cycle, chasing that life of fast money, fast women and fast cars, is the first step down the road that always leads you back to life behind bars. You can find men twice your age still stuck on that same page, in and out of jail, just scheming on money for cars, drugs and bail. It's not that you're too old, but that you're young enough to break the mold. If you've got the character and determination, when you're thirty-two you could be banking steady pay from a legal vocation and taking your wife and children on a family vacation. Or you could be writing for The Beat Without about all the time you're facing! Don't let that negative voice in your head send you to a life time in prison or an early death! Show the squad there's a better life than the street, and a healthier way to show love than sporting an RIP tee.

I got up, grabbed the already open envelope and sat down on my gram cracker mattress that was build on top of a brick. I smiled when I seen her and my son lip prints on top of the letter.

Don't Wake Me 'Cause I'm Dreaming (Of My Daughter)

Don't wake me 'cause I'm dreamin'
 nothing bad but good
 sometimes bad, that's the way it seems
 dreamin' 'bout havin' a kid
 now I do
 I have a daughter
 but I'm still a kid too
 don't wake me up 'cause I'm dreaming
 'bout having money
 to take care of a family
 that I have now
 she was born Saturday June 24, 2006
 and I can't see her because I'm still locked down
 my baby momma says she's a beautiful lil' girl
 now I have a new family member in my world
 don't wake me up I'm dreamin'
 'bout how to change
 'cause for my actions there's no one to blame
 I have a kid in my life
 I can't see her and
 it hurts me like a burnin' flame
 I can't be there for her
 and to me that's ashame
 so I have to get out this lil'scene
 it's hurtin' me so bad
 to the heart
 so I need to stop and get out of this dream

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Remember the promise you made to your little girl, and to yourself, about the life you were going to give her. That's the dream you don't want to wake up from - the dream you're striving towards. Peace and best wishes for you and your family.

I'm one to tell you about the loss of a baby! You'll never feel another pain similar to the pain of losing something as precious as another person's life.

The Joy Of New Life, The Pain Of Death

Life is hell if that's what you make it... The good things in life can be taken away from you and sometimes never given back. People spend their lives to get what they want and they are stripped from you in an instant. Jealous, weak suckers rob their brothers and kill each other because we don't want one another to succeed in life.

When a man loses his life a baby is born, but babies lose their lives just as quickly. I'm one to tell you about the loss of a baby! You'll never feel another pain similar to the pain of losing something as precious as another person's life. However, there is no joy like the joy you feel when a baby is born. Witnessing the birth of a baby... you'll never feel that joy again.

Being locked up... Sooner or later you will feel hopeless or you'll maintain your hope. Either way you're locked up, but yo, that's life.

-BL B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We were with you all the way... until that last line, BL. We feel the emotions you express in the euphoria you feel at witnessing the birth of a child — and the desperate pain of losing one. We also feel how impoverished we have allowed our society to become in your description of how casually life is taken and justified. But then you end with that kind of ho-hum, oh well, it's just life conclusion, and we can't accept that, at least not from someone as smart and well-spoken as you. Sometimes, the gift of intelligence and insight is a curse, because it puts greater demands on you for change. You can see clearly, so we expect more from you than from someone less mature and less able to understand. Don't accept what you see! Don't accept being controlled by forces outside yourself (and forces inside four walls). Use your knowledge and willingness to learn to move yourself into a new reality (which will also have downs as well as ups), and be the teacher, the leader this city and state and country and world so desperately need. Don't let yourself down.

Life Aint No Game

Little youngstas these days just don't have no type
 of sense
 Little girls want to go around having sex
 At the age of twelve
 Boys want to go around getting females pregnant
 Babies having babies
 It just don't make no sense
 Knowing you ain't gone be able to pay for child
 support
 'Cause you still a child yo' damn self
 Man, life ain't no game
 You youngstas think that it's ok to sell drugs
 Sell yo' body
 Rob banks
 Going around pimpin' these females
 Or females pimpin females
 Life ain't no game
 Now these days ninjas ain't playin
 Ninjas funkign over 25 cents
 Drugs is getting sold like candy
 Dope fiends stealing from their family
 Just to get high
 Ninjas killing ninjas over their feelings nowadays
 Life ain't no game
 What you youngstas need to do is get yo' money the
 right way
 You don't have to sell drugs, rob banks or sell yo'
 body
 Put yo' head in those books
 Graduate
 Get yo' diploma
 Yo' GED
 Go to college
 Get a job
 Don't just let your life end easily
 Quit comitting crimes
 Quit coming to jail
 Do what's right in life
 Go down the right path now
 Become a leader
 Not a follower
 Always remember
 Keep yo' head up
 Be the best you can be
 All of you are some intelligent youngestas
 Most of you still have a few years like me to
 understand that Life aint no game.

-Marquilla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's right - hallelujah!

No Looking Back

He made my mom cry.
 He cheated and he lied.
 He just stared back at me
 with his cold eyes.
 He hurt my sister,
 left her with scars.
 He was always drunk,
 high on crack.
 When he left me
 he didn't look back.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Incredible piece Jessica. Brilliant piece. We knew you were hiding your talent. It's out of the bag now. Let it loose. Keep writing, please. Now tell us how is your mom doing since he left?

Blind By Choice

Are you blind or are you refusing to see? I ask this question because a lot of us claim to be on our P's and Q's, just made a mistake and now you doing time for it. If you really take the time to look, analyze, and ask your yourself honestly what do you see, most of us are going to say the same thing: Drugs, crack heads, homeless, projects (section 8 housing).

Some see the inside of juvenile, but the worst of them all is the deaths of our loved ones, homies, and innocent bystanders. We see all of this, hear all of this and we're still blind or choosing not to see. If you see this almost every day and you still continue to do what you do — smoke, rob, kill, sell — we're continuing the same life we see on a regular basis. 50 Cent said this in one of his songs, "Death gotta be easy, 'cause life is hard, It leaves you physically, mentally, and emotionally scarred."

Now take a look deeper, open your eyes wide like Tracy Ellis Ross off of Girlfriends and what do you see? I see a loss of hope, faith, courage, a lack of trust, commitment, and no love. Some of us claim turfs, 'hoods, clicks, etc. And we die for the set. What has that turf done for you? Wait, wait, wait... I know it gets you scrapers on dubs, money, women, respect, and everything that comes with that. Have the drug dealers ever ask themselves who's mama, grandma, pops, uncle tha your selling that drug to? Naw, they don't 'cause it ain't no love.

Life is lived so you can make mistakes then learn. Nobody perfect. Life is hard bus there's a way to help you get through this rough life. It's called basic instructions before leaving earth. That's the Bible. Read it any you will see. People always saying I believe in God, I have faith. How do you have faith in a Man you cannot see, but not have faith in yourself to do right? That's for you to figure out, not me.

-Reese-C-Cup B5

From The Beat: We don't know what's gotten into you lately, RCC, but whatever it is, we like it! This is another first-class piece of thinking and writing. If you were to study the great religions of the world, you would find that all of them are based on similar lessons for living, namely to love yourself and your fellow human beings, and to treat others the way you want to be treated and the way you want your loved ones treated. Those sound like such simple rules, but when we look as far out into the world as we want (like Israel and Lebanon or Iraq) or as close into our world as we want (like the projects and street turf battles), it seems like this is the most difficult lesson of all for human beings to accept. Our hope for the future is tied to individual enlightenment and self-awareness, however it comes. We see that in you, and we applaud it.

What Is Life?

My mother my father my sister
My life
My freedom my friends my thoughts
My life

-Franklin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In just 16 words, you have managed to tell us what your life is and why life is so precious. Don't forget this one truth: Everybody is as attached to their loved ones, their freedom, their thoughts as you are to yours. If you understand that simple idea and respect it, you will never again be in the kind of trouble you are in now. This is a beautiful and profound poem. Thank you for it.

People always saying I believe in God, I have faith.
How do you have faith in a Man you cannot see, but
not have faith in yourself to do right?

I Want Life

To me life something that you want to have. I want to have a life. I don't want to be locked up for the rest of my life 'cause this shhh is weak to me. Sometimes life is fun, sometimes it's bad, but it's what you make it.

Me, I'm tied of not taking control of my life because when I go to the Ranch I'ma do what I gotta do to get out. I'ma think about me and do what I gotta do for me to make it in the world so I do not have to go jail because I'm 18 now. So I made I plan that I'ma follow when I get out of the Ranch, and a plan when I'm in there.

All I'm trying to do is keep my head up, get a good job, go to college and play basketball and study in four subjects — math, black history, literature, and I'm still thinking of the other one. But I have a plan with my life and that is what life is for me.

-Cash B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is so impressive, Cash. To be honest, it thrills us to read a piece like this, as if a light has gone on inside your head that has let you see things differently and more clearly. Your plan is a good one because it starts where it should start, by building a foundation. We bet that once you're exposed to new ideas and people in a college setting, your mind will expand rapidly with experiences you can't yet know and knowledge you don't yet have. Those experiences will help you decide on that fourth area of study, but we'd love for you to think about sociology, because it looks at group behavior (how individuals function in different groups and how groups relate to each other). With your own experience in the juvenile justice system, you could shed light on group behaviors that most college students have never experienced or thought about. Keep moving forward, Cash. There is no limit to what you can accomplish.



Who Failed, What Failed?

Society never failed.
They say it was all me.
After all, isn't that the reason the court calls me guilty?
It was not my family.
They're trying to do what is best.
That's why they turned me in, placed me under arrest.
And it was not the cops that bruised my wrists.
It was the cuffs clamped too tight, even though I did not resist.
And the shirt that was ripped as they threw me around didn't matter at all, because I was screwin' around.
Was my family doing what was best when they smacked me around
because I fled school?
The teachers barely taught, and they never try to understand.
It's learning communication and support that turns boys into men.
It's no one's fault but my own, and I do understand.
As long as society continues to lie, it is all my fault, and I hold in the cry.

-Brendan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Powerful writing Brendan. Is it possible that the truth lies somewhere in middle territory? Isn't there always enough blame for everyone to own up a bit, including yourself? You have a gift for writing. We hope you'll choose to practice it now and forever.

What Is Life?

life is death
 life is strugglin' to live when there's really none left
 life is hard but at the same time easy
 life is a ninja gettin' hyphy when he see a thick breezy
 life is hell
 life is sometimes a big ass cell
 life is a game and also the truth
 lie ain't easy when you ain't got no crew
 life is friends foes and family
 life is waiting to die and ninjas dropping randomly
 life is money even if you broke
 life is pain and it ain't no joke
 life to some is lust and love
 life is change when push come to shove
 life is challenge and make you wanna quit
 but if you really really think about it
 life is a b— ... and then you die

-Chop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You give us a feel for how you've got to deal with life, its challenges, joys and strife. When you go out with that last line though, we wonder if you made it through the "change" and came out the other side, would you still feel it all ends when you die? Or maybe when you've lived a full life, been a father to your family and a husband to your wife, it doesn't feel like death is the end, not when you've planted love in the hearts of family and friends. But you've got to rise up above the street, or your life will be swallowed by violence and greed.

Talkin' to My Inner Self

Talkin' to my inner self
 That me and only me know
 Hate listenin' to all
 These people callin' me a criminal
 Sittin' in front of the judge
 Knowin' that my life and freedom
 Is in his hands
 So I know I have to get my life together
 And stop playin'
 Yes I did dumb things
 Robbed ninjaz for money
 Jewelry, especially rings
 But I've also made good decisions
 I have a daughter and to her I'm the father that's missin'
 Me I'm no gangster nor thug
 Don't get me wrong
 I'm from the hood,
 So show me some love
 Bad things I did
 Is comin' to jail for robbin' ninjaz
 And sellin' drugs,
 Yes I bust slugs
 But now I'm not thinkin' 'bout no one else
 'Cause I'm talkin' to my inner self

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another powerful and clear-eyed poem... That inner self might also just be your best self: honest, eloquent, loyal, modest, determined, and full of pride and love for his new child. What can you do to make sure it is your Best Self that guides your action in the future?

I think they would think I was out of my mind,
 and I am, but they would also see I was full of
 love and happiness and that I survived through
 more b-s than most people.

A Time Capsule For My Son

I would like my son to open my time capsule and see my cars and the music I listened to. I would also want him to see the way I lived, good and bad, and how I made changes. I think what would surprise him the most would be how I changed when I got out of jail.

I wouldn't bury it because I would want it to be easy to find. I think they would think I was out of my mind, and I am, but they would also see I was full of love and happiness and that I survived through more b-s than most people. I would also have a lot of pictures and views so he could see how I carried myself. I wouldn't want him to see it until he was grown because I would not want to influence I'm to be like me.

The last thing I would put in it was letters like this for him to read. I hope I'm still around to look at him with him.

-Ezekiel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an extremely thoughtful piece - it is clear you really took the time to think about how you would want to do this and that is a great way to make your story stand out. We find it interesting that you wouldn't want your son to see the capsule until you were older because you wouldn't want him to be influenced in the wrong direction. You seem to understand that there are better ways to live your life and are ready to take advantage of these options. Before you make something happen, you talk about it, you believe in it. It sounds like are starting to believe in yourself so stay focused.

Mind: You can't get lucky all the time.

Inner-self: Well then I'm gonna be ready for the Pen

Mind: You're stupid. Why you wanna be locked up.

Conversation Between My Mind and Inner Self

What's up wit' it Beat. Well this yo' homeboy Lil' Spooks coming at y'all up in ALACO. Well I'm 'bout to write on this topic...

Inner-self: Damn, I'm tired of being locked up.

Mind: Then why don't you stop doing what you do?

Inner-self: Because I can't stop.

Mind: So then you better be ready for the Pen

Inner-self: Not if I don't get caught.

Mind: You can't get lucky all the time.

Inner-self: Well then I'm gonna be ready for the Pen

Mind: You're stupid. Why you wanna be locked up.

Inner-self: I don't, but I'm a soldier

Mind: Suit yourself.

Inner-self: Yup, but I can't wait to go back to my hood.

Mind: See there you go again.

Inner-self: What's wrong with going back to the hood?

Mind: You're gonna get caught up.

Inner-self: I ain't trippin', I miss posting up on the block.

Mind: Well you're gettin' me mad, so stop having this conversation with me.

Inner-self: Alright.

-Lil' Spooks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for breaking down that inner conflict in such clear and vivid language. Damn. As much as we want to agree with the Mind side of you for trying to help you stay out of jail, your "Mind" character is hella impatient and insulting. It's like your Inner Self is saying your feelings, and your Mind is just telling you you're an ef-up. How about this, how about introducing a new character - a Stronger Self. The job of the Stronger Self is to guide you and help you come up with ideas for how you could find an alternative to your current way of living. What would your stronger self suggest you do?

Good-Bye

Inside out
Out side in
Gone in the wind
Out of time
Out of breath
Out of love
Misunderstood
Hurt
Good-bye
No more hurt
The love is here
My breath is back
The time is always ticking
I'm back now and ready
Pain and guilt
Good-bye
I'm strong and I'm prepared
For a new block
A new set
A new click
A new start

-B-Eyes, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: When you get out and into the new life that you've prepared yourself for, we would love for you to write us about that new block, new set, new click and new start. Good luck!

The Good And The Bad In My Box

I'd put a lot of stuff in my time capsule. One of them would be pictures of me when I was having hell a fun, and pictures of when I wasn't having fun. I'd put a Hennessy bottle and a Remy bottle in there — they'd be full, too! These are the alcohol brands I drink, and I know they'd be hell a strong when and if someone opened it fifty years from now.

I'd put notebooks of my writings, so people can see and read about the good times and the bad times of my life. I'd also put all my dreads in the box (if I cut 'em!). They represent the good and the bad of my life. I'd put the videotape of my family and friends. We did this video a year or so ago — going around the neighborhood, talking about going dumb, the hyphy movement. We also recorded a little movie we made about the streets.

I want a picture of my family and friends. I'd put the gold teeth I have in there, too, and my chain, my watch and my ring. Some I bought, some were given to me. I'd also put in my Pokey Man cards — I liked them because my big brother liked them. I'd even put the three keys to my ol' cars (Buick Century, Cadillac and a scraper wagon).

I'd bury this in my backyard, but first I'd have to buy a house! I'd want my kids or my grandchildren to find it. If I was there fifty years from now to see it, what would surprise me the most about the things I'd bury today, would probably be the pictures and the videotapes — I'd trip off how I was looking young and good lookin', and what I was doing in my teens! That's all folks.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, we'd like to see those videotapes and movies right now! But yeah, in fifty years, everything looks strange, fashion, the clothes people wore, the way the wore their hair — ever seen pictures of 7'1" Wilt Chamberlain playing basketball in those little short-shorts? Looks so strange today, but he looked bad at the time! You'd trip off the pictures of family and friends, too, how much they've changed — or maybe some, you might even have forgotten how they looked if they moved away or passed on, and it might bring a tear to you eye. Thanks for peek into your life, but we want to know your plan to make the money to buy that house — not in the street, or you may not be free when it's time to dig up the box. You feel?

When Is It OK To Cry

When guys say "I never cry", that's a sign of weakness. Everybody in the world cries. Most people cry because they have emotional feelings about something going on in their lives. Crying is medicine. When you cry, it makes you feel better inside. Then the situation is better.

When I come into Juvenile, most of the time I cry. But the last time I didn't. I don't know why.

I have a girlfriend and we have cried many times together while we have been going out. But she tells me the tears that come out of my eyes are not real. But they are. She thinks I'm this bad guy, even though I don't show many feelings to her. And she can't see it. I still let her know how much I care for her. And I also talk to her.

-Rascal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We agree with you — crying is medicine, of sorts. It really does help to let your feelings out. And crying is one way to do that. We hope this is not the last time we hear from you. You need to keep teaching us readers about the life you have led, the life you presently are leading and the road you want to get on from here. Honest writing on this topic!

Three Years Away From Home

if we go back to two thousand and two
you would know i did whatever i wanted to
as a young teen i smoked and ran the streets
went home on probation and got expelled from two schools
said screw school and a judge I'd rather act a fool
then the judge fooled me and sent me away
that's also when i began to let my teenage years go astray
after eleven long months i was done with my time
went back to my old ways and committed more crime
caught a two-eleven beat it and went home with a straight
release

three weeks later once again i gave my freedom to the police
this time it was grand theft and got put back on probation
then i got violated and was back in the police station
i got violated for smoking so they sent me to thunder road
ran three times got caught and in a police car i rode
it was then two thousand four and i was on my sixth trip to
the hall

i did another eleven months and got released in the fall
i was still on probation had a job and was going to school
april fourth was my day to get off because i was actin' cool
that was until i was caught out runnin' the streets
and again had a few run-in's with the police
they gave me a new date july twenty-seventh almost seven
months

i was now so close but it only took one more month
for me to catch some new cases
that would be my seventh time in the hall the judge
sentenced me to camp and i'm about sick of these places
now i'm up at camp with six more months to do
and after i get my release my incarcerated days are through
it is now july eighteenth ten days before my eighteenth
birthday

so after eight trips to the hall four placements
and more than three years away from home and five on
probation

i think it's about time to stay away

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's an saga, a tale of so many years of needless suffering and drama. Or maybe it's just what you did need, nothing less than this would get you to see that this next time you get released — you need to do whatever it takes to stay free. Drugs seem to be a one-way ticket back to the street, and catching an adult case is just what you don't need. What are the other "triggers" that take you back to behavior that has you incarcerated again sooner or later? Those are the things you need to avoid at all costs, a no-matter-what commitment to quit a game you've always lost. Yeah, it's about time, but it takes more than just words to escape a life of crime. So next week write us something about your plan of how you will after this release — stay a free man! 'Cause now you're almost eighteen and you won't be back here (in the juvenile system) ever again. We're know you're ready, but you need to know how to keep it steady.

Keepin' It Real

they always talk about keepin' it real
but if real was they' heart, half of the people wouldn't
live

half these people probably die
they always lie, 'bout girls and skrill
why you can't least if you do lie, lie 'bout good things
always tryin'a be coo', like i got two things
keepin' it real like, i shot her, i shot him

i got guns, i got runs
i got drugs, i'll do that, i'll do this
i rob people, i hit licks
i got money, i got whips
they talk shhh, they ain't gee's
no money, no piece, probably neva sold cream or weed
why you don't ever hear 'em say they got a college
degree

p.h.d., m.b.a., or graduated high school
never been to jail, no shoot-out's
or hangin' round dumb dudes
they don't ever tell the truth, and i know why
because they can't

'cause it hurts when they look inside and realize that
they fake

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This whole scene in the Hall and at Camp, where everyone has to talk like he's a hard criminal for a fact, feeds the system with youngsters who keep comin' back, 'cause the "fake" hits the street and tries to live the myth that he's made, tries to make that fake mask into his face, and before he knows what hit him — he catches a case, and comes back with more stories, a meaner mug and a sadder fate 'cause now he's really become a part of this place. Yeah, it's time to get real with school, get a legal job and stop playing the system's fool. The street's just the net for the system's next catch. Thanks for your eloquent words of consequence. Maybe for someone they'll make a difference.

The Game Called Life

Life to me is a game. You only get one chance to play, win or loose. There is no rematch. You get to choose who is on your team - friends who you think will help you win (i.e. being successful). If you're lucky enough to make it through the first quarter (birth-twenties) you might feel the need to cut certain people from your team if you ain't winning.

Second quarter is the time you really need to start getting stuff together because it's almost half time. You also need to make sure you don't get fouled out of the game (prison-dead); third quarter is crucial 'cause you need to do everything you can to get ahead.

Fourth quarter should be your time to kick back and chill if you on top. If you are not, you got to make those last minute shots to win. Are you gonna win or loose 'cause guess what? When it says GAME OVER, it's over!

-Young Weezy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First and foremost, we love the basketball analogy. It really makes your words come to life in a way that almost anyone could understand where you are coming from. However we do need to put something in perspective. For most Americans, living past your twenties is a given. Now in a third world country where folks are living off of pennies each day, dying young is more of the norm. Here you have significant obstacles but fewer of them keep you from seeing 30. So it's not luck that keeps folks alive in their 20's, it's the choices they have made. We do like what you have outlined though - pick the right people to spend time with, work hard and when the time is right you will be able to sit back and enjoy the show. We hope your plan looks something like this one.

My Life Is So Screwed Up

Man I think life is ef'd up. I cannot believe my life turned out this way. I just wish I could go back and do everything over.

I am young, but a couple of years in CYA is messed up. It seem like forever, man I can't do this shhh. I didn't do nothin'. Why me? Why the F do I got to be here locked up. I hate life right now.

How they just go take my shhh away like that I can't eat sleep or even shhh when I want to. Man, a couple of years of my life in this hell-hole. What am I going to do? Why? Why out of all the people in this world—me?

I got to be locked up. This shhh ain't fair. I'm sad, I can't think about nothing. My head hurt. What am I suppose to do? Locked up in CYA. I can't see no boys, take no baths, I can't do shhh but think. My mind is ef'd up. My life is ef'd up. A couple of years in CYA, I can do it, but shhh life is still ef'd up.

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Aleshia, You, know, we had to nod our heads reading this, because you're so right: lockdown, losing valuable years of your young life, feeling regrets, that is all ef'd up. And we feel you on all the stress you write about in this piece. Crazy as it sounds though, you know what's not f'd up: The fact that you get a second chance. Take all this pain, all this rage, all this regret and just think what it means: If you really feel this bad, and you force yourself to remember how bad you felt, you will never ever do anything like this let Hurt come up to your ear and say "No, girl, you don't need to do this. Been there done that, and it Hurt". Play this right, and this pain could turn out to be your lifesaver. In the meantime, keep writing about it and getting it off your chest. The Beat will always be here to listen.

About Me

Well, my nickname is Cedes, short for Mercedes. This year I went to Thurgood Marshall High School and I was in the 10th grade. I am 16 years old. I will be 17 in Nov. 2006.

Me being in jail made me realize what I did was dumb and stupid. I thought my life was over, and thought of all the things I got to do to get out of the thug life that I'm living in.

The thing I will do when I get out of jail is go and finish school and get a job that I can work with and I like. I am going to stop hanging around people that do bad stuff and be around positive people. And I am trying to give my life to God because He is the answer to my life, and the only one helping me with all my problems.

I live with my daddy and he is a pain in the ass. He don't know what it's like being a girl and living in the ghetto all yo' life. It's hard because there a lot of thing that I got to do on my own and find out a lot of things on my own. And everything I want I have to get it all by myself and work for myself.

My brother got killed from some hating ninja because he was a smart man and could do anything he want. Then my mom died. But it all happen for a reason. I leave it all up to God.

-Cedes GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have already been through a lot in your young life Mercedes, and much of it would disable a person without your drive to do better. We're so sorry about your brother. We think you have developed a solid plan that rests on a foundation of school, which is the bedrock for a better future. We can see that when you say "leave it all up to God," you're really saying that you want to do your part in living up to God's plan for you, so you're not just a passive observer but an active participant. As hard as it is today, if you follow through you will make your tomorrow so much easier. We know you can do it!

I live with my daddy and he . . . don't know what it's like being a girl
and living in the ghetto all yo' life.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Great Grandmother's Necklace

If you were to open my time capsule it would be my great grandmother's necklace from years back. I would want my kids to see it and know who the woman was and how she was a great person who went through racism and slavery. I would want my kids' kids to know she was a wonderful person. I would want them to cherish her necklace so it would be passed on.

And just because it is a necklace do not mean that you can give it up for money. It's worth more than money. I want my family's kids to wear it so it can be passed down to all the little ones all through our generations. I would want the necklace to be a path to the future if you was to put it on, because my great grandmother would have gone through so much that she would have paved your way to the future.

-Lil' Mika GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a wonderful way of sharing your family history with the next generations. Who told you the story of your great grandmother and her necklace? We often think when we read about young people stealing things from others that they don't appreciate how some wonderful treasures are "worth more than money" to those they've taken from. Have you ever thought about that? Do you know when your great grandmother was born, and have you heard many stories about her life? We would love for you to share some of them with The Beat.



My Time Capsule: Movies, A Bible, A Gun, A Letter

In my time capsule, I would include may things.

In my time capsule, I would put the movie Farenheit 9/11, so that people would know how the government was.

Then I would put some movies like Scarface, The Godfather, Menace to Society, etc... then just in case something happens.

I would put an AK-47 or an AK-15 so that whatever is happening in the future (probably a world war), they would have some kind of protection.

I would put The Bible and other religious books.

I would make a video about the life on the block and put it in there. Then I would write a letter to the generation telling them how this world is, and tell them whatever is goin' on, keep your head up.

I would also write a letter to my family that is in that generation telling them about their roots, and what they should do, and of all else, I'd tell them to stick together.

Oh yeah, Beat! Guess what? I'm 'bout to get out!!!! I'm hella juiced. Alright then, stay up!

-Young G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great and varied piece of writing! In a way, it reveals more about the world you live in today than the one you expect from the future. It's terrible to think that a gun even crosses our minds when we imagine the needs of the next generation, especially right next to a Bible. With everything you know about Jesus, do you think he'd want to be right next to a weapon?

Deep Inside

Deep inside me I see darkness and light.
I see light because of the love I have for myself
And for the person I am,
The sincerity I have,
The way I put my friends before myself.

I am shy but flirtatious.
Not the "pimp" or "playa" that people say I am.
I am strong and will defend myself if needed,
But not the "gangster" that people think I am.

I am loving and have feelings for women (one in particular),
Not the dog women portray me as.
I have never cheated on a female or played one -
That is the honest truth.

I see darkness for the hate of the things
I have put my friends, family, and myself through;
The decisions I have made to jeopardize myself and, most
importantly, My life;
The pain my love ones have suffered.

But as I look at the pain,
I know it makes me stronger and wiser.
Now you know the inner me a little better
Lastly, much love to you little boxer I'm still with you.

-Lil' Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece has real heart to it - it is honest, well-written and takes the reader on a mini journey through your experiences. It's hard for people to see, let alone understand, the individual, not the collective. Unfortunately men get labeled as "dog" or "gangster" even selfish. We like how you address these issues by asking to be judged by your actions and not who people assume you to be. Pain can make you stronger, and if you are lucky, wiser. You have to be open to the lessons it is trying to teach you so stay strong and stay open, you are on the right track.

How I Like It In Here

I don't like it here because it's not the place I should be at. The one and only place I should be at is home with my mom and the rest of my family. The reason I think I'm here is because I need to learn my lesson and not ever come here.

When I turn eighteen, I'm coming back here to clear my record so I can start all over again and when I do, I'm going straight to college, and I'm going to work on getting a college degree. The only way I can't get a college degree is if I'm stuck up in here for the rest of my entire life.

But if I'm not in here, I can go to the bathroom whenever I want to and also eat whatever I want to. One thing I will promise to myself is that I'll never be back here again.

-G-M B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds all good, G-M, really good. If you follow through on this plan, you've already learned all the lessons juvy has to teach you. Will you be completing high school when you're home again? Where would you like to go to college? What would you like to study? Just remember that we've read this promise of never coming back before, so don't let us — or yourself — down. Good luck.

**I'm going straight to college,
and I'm going to work on
getting a college degree.**

In Loving Memory Marcellus aka Cell

Marcellus wasn't like any of these ninjas. He loved his squad. He went broke for his squad. He wasn't the type of ninja that just thought about himself, but don't get me wrong our ninja got down for his crown when the time came around. Everybody he new liked him. He was never hard to get along with.

So when Cell was put to rest it hurt a lot of people. So many people were at his funeral. Bra's dreads 'bout sprouted fast. We miss bra. It wasn't time for him to go. His daughter didn't even really get to know him but don't trip, bra, she gonna hear a lot of good about you. I love you Marcellus. I'll see you when my time comes.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Another fine tribute to Cell. All of us at The Beat hope that your time doesn't come for a long time, Naudie Bo. In Cell's name go to school, get a job, get off probation, help your community and help yourself see beyond the hood! Stay safe.

time to stop flyin' down 'cause all
we gonna do is crash and die fast
and Cell ain't 'bout to let that happen
any time soon.

Time To Fly Straight and Stop Flying Down

What it really be Beat. This one goes out to my squad. First off as always, RIP Cell, for as long as I can remember we been living that East Oakland mentality, comin' back and forth to the hall, buyin' cars and getting them took for not havin' a license, smokin' grapes, cuttin' school and most of the time just sayin' eff it and not goin' to school for months at a time, and all that shhh ain't got us nowhere.

Our brother just died, may God rest his soul, shhh we put in enough work, now it's time for us to shine the legit way. Yea it's still a couple of us still out there puttin' in work but that's gonna come to a stop fast.

As much shhh as we did, we're lucky to be alive. I love you ninjas. I don't wanna have to go to any of y'all funerals any time soon. We're a solid squad. We make sure each other got the low, if not we go and put money in the empty pocket, take each other on one to go, get some che low even though the next bra got dumbass stack in his pocket. We jus ain't gonna pass it out and yea we got down on the bad side a couple times but we didn't hold no grudge on each other we kept it solid, 'cause we all brothers.

So time to stop flyin' down 'cause all we gonna do is crash and die fast and Cell ain't 'bout to let that happen any time soon. And it ain't no more coming back to the hall for those that are sittin' down now so when we knock out this time we got to get on that straight tip fast like an OPD Task car and for my bra still out there gettin' down for yo' crown, be safe. Love you I'm praying for us stay strong and to all you haters you can break your self but you can't break me.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew
From The Beat: We're glad to hear you broadcasting a positive message to your homies about what lesson to take from Marcellus' tragic death. You know you have a choice, and we hope your friends listen to you!

RIP Cell

What's good Beat? Rest in peace Marcellus.

What it be Cellie Bo? Remember I used to call you that back in the day? When you was only about twelve or thirteen and I was like ten.

Hey bra, whatever happened to that Brendel Pit you had? I don't think I ever told you about that time when I found your cousin's pit. I knew it was his 'cause the tail was gone from when you smashed it with a tombstone when you was playin' with it at the graveyard over there by Frick. And I remember when you lied and told me you smashed its head, damn bra, you be tryin' to work but yea I found it brought it home and my grandma saw it and made me put it in her car and she drove it a couple blocks away from the house and let it loose. Oh well it's tail was gone anyway.

Ninja you still owe me from that time when you got me for that bag I let you see it and you was like, yeah this is a pillow and all of a sudden you started play fighting with Dre and you said you lost it in the grass but I ain't tripping. It was some boo boo anyways, and you never told me how you had your mom's car but I already know 'cause you didn't have no cars back then.

But yeah bra I just keep remembering' when I was just with you. We was painting the hood then went to them female's house then you asked me to leave the room.

I can't believe ninjas really took my bra's life. I just can't get over it, WHY? Why you bra? Eff! Not Cell! Me and you was the only ninjas in the squad from our area, I miss you bra you was a good dude that shhh wasn't meant for you.

I know your mom's going through it, but I know you the one helpin' us all stay strong.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Every RIP does feel like a "dumb ass" RIP, since we don't want to say goodbye or RIP to anyone in our lives. Well said.

Crazy

Crazy
I am in jail

Crazy
The colors I am wearing do not match

Crazy
Behind these walls

Crazy
Have to go to bed at a certain time

Crazy
I must be crazy because I am back in jail

-Precious Love, 150 Crew
From the Beat: You might just need to start thinking about how your going to handle things when you get out, meaning how will you make sure you don't come back to this crazy place again? We wish you luck.

Beautiful

Beautiful
The naps in my hair
Beautiful
The ash on my ankle
Beautiful
The hair on my legs
Beautiful
My attitude
Beautiful
My ashy lips
Beautiful
That's Me

-Precious Love, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Nice piece! We love to hear people loving themselves to the fullest.

Mi Promesa A Dios

¿G-onda Beat? ¿Como estan? Espero que esten firme. Pues yo estoy esperando a que me transfieran a CYA. Mientras estoy aqui me pongo a pensar en mi pasado y me acorde que hace dos años y medio le hice una promesa a Dios. Le prometi cambiar mi vida, dejar de fumar drogas, tomar chelas, dejar de ser pandillero, y pasar más tiempo con mi familia. Como pueden ver, niquiera tuve la oportunidad de tratar de cambiar mi vida.

Cuando salga de aqui voy a cumplir con mi promesa que un día le hice a Dios y dedicar más tiempo a mi familia a mis dos morritos.

From The Beat: No has cumplido con una promesa que le hicistes a tu gran Dios. ¿Que obstaculos se te han presentado en la vida que hicieron que no cumplieras con esta promesa? ¿Como podemos estar seguro que esta vez si vas a cumplir tu promesa? ¿Que haras diferente? Esperamos que hagas lo posible para realizar estas cosas.

My Promise To God

What's up Beat? How are y'all doing? I hope y'all are doing well. Well, I am waiting to be transferred to CYA. While I am here, I start to think about my past and I remembered that about two years and a half ago, I made a promise to God. I promised Him that I was going to change my life, stop smoking drugs, drinking beers, stop being a gang-banger, and spend more time with my family. As y'all can see, I didn't even have the opportunity to try to change my life.

When I get out of here, I am going to fulfill my promise that I one day made to God and dedicate more of my time to my family and to my little brothers.

-Gilbert 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have not kept one promise that you made to your great God. What obstacles have presented themselves in life that made you not fulfill this promise? How can we be sure that this time you are going to fulfill your promise? What are you going to do differently? We hope you do whatever's possible to realize these things.

Gracias A Dios

¿G-onda Beat? Yo escribo dandole gracias a Dios por tenerme en este lugar. Dios decide en mi vida. Si estoy aqui es porque Dios sabía que me podía pasar algo en la calle. Pueda ser que me hubieran atropellado o tener un mal accidente. Yo pienso que Dios nos tiene aqui para que aprendamos de nuestros errores.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que aprendas de tus errores? ¿Que has aprendido de todo esto? Esperamos que Dios te de esa fuerza de voluntad que necesitas para seguir adelante y hacer las cosas correctamente. Suerte y sigue manteniendo tu creencia en Dios para que te ayude en tu vida.

Thanks To God

What's up Beat? As I write this, I want to give thanks to God for having me in this place. God decides what goes on with my life. If I am in here, it's because God knew something was going to happen to me out on the streets. It could have been anything from getting hit by a vehicle or I could have been in a bad accident. I believe that God has us in here so we can learn from our mistakes.

-Jorge B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you believe you'll learn from your mistakes? What have you learned from all this? We hope that your God gives you that will power that you need in order to continue forward and do things right. Good luck to you and continue maintaining your believe in your God so that He could help you out in your life.

Cuando Me Arrestaron

Cuando me arrestaron senti como si hubiera perdido mi espiritu. Al principio, cuando me pusieron las esposas, me senti muy triste porque me puse a pensar en que le iba a pasar a mi familia. Me preocupaba como se fueran a sentir cuando se enteraran que estaba en cárcel. Lo primero que se me vino a la mente fue en como le iba a decir a mi novia.

Despues decidi que cuando saliera me iba a ir a México. Días después mi mama me vino a visitar y cuando la mire, lo primero que hice fue abrazarla y me puse a llorar. Despues empezamos a platicar. Cuando le dije que pensaba irme a México cuando saliera, ella me dijo que estaba loco. Me pregunto que iba a ser en México. Luego me fui a mi cuarto cuando se fue y desde entonces me fui acostumbrando al lugar.

From The Beat: Creemos que lo más duro de caer preso es cuando nuestros seres querido sufren por la situación. ¿Crees que esta experiencia te ayude mucho en tu vida? ¿Si te dieran otra oportunidad, que harias? ¿Qué harias diferente? Creemos que irte a México no seria la mejor decisión. Tú no sabes cuanto tu madre ha de haber luchado por traerte aqui para tú desperdices todo su esfuerzo por algo que no sirve. Deberias de pensar en aquellos quienes te quieren. Ellos son los que más sufren. Gracias por tu senceridad y palabras.

When They Arrested Me

When they arrested me, I felt like I had lost my spirit. In the beginning, when they put the handcuffs on me, I felt very sad because I started to think about what was going to happen to my family. I was worried about how they were going to feel when they found out that I was in jail. The first thing that came to my mind was, "How am I going to tell my girlfriend?"

Then, I decided that when I got out, I was going to go to Mexico. Days later, my mom came to visit me and when I saw her, the first thing I did was hug her and I started to cry. Then, we started to chat. When I told her that I was thinking about going to Mexico when I got out, she told me that I was crazy. She asked what I was going to do in Mexico. Then I went to my room when she left, and ever since that moment, I started getting accustomed to this place.

-Arnulfo B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe that the toughest thing about getting locked up is when our loved ones suffer because of our situation. Do you believe that this experience will help you out a lot in your life? If they gave you another opportunity, what would you do with it? What would you do differently? We believe that going to Mexico would not be the best decision available to you. You have no idea how much your mother must have suffered to bring you to this country for you to let all her hard work go to waste over something that is not worth sacrificing all her efforts for. You should think about those who love you. They are the ones who suffer the most. Thank you for your words and your sincerity.

Free Stylin'

I'm feelin' how I wanna feel
High and I ain't on no pill
Ninjas steady bumpin' gums
Quick to go and grab they gun
But no not me, I'll blow you away
Wit' my words, lyrically you feelin' me
Mentally you ain't hearin me
Like sideshows on the block
I'm showin' off, ghostin' and skatin'
Jordans, it's what you getting, not what
You sportin', what's more important
Your pride or your freedom, yea
It's somebody named eighteen, but everybody
Don't get to see em.

-Young Jaz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whoa! That is some deep stuff—we especially like the line about pride versus freedom. Nice Work.

Mis Pensamientos En Los Temas

Creo que el peor crimen es matar a otra persona y el castigo para ellos sería estar en la cárcel por mucho tiempo para que aprendan la lección y dejen de estar haciendo cosas malas. Ellos no saben el daño que les hacen a los familiares y a sus amigos.

Bueno cuando una persona muere obviamente no sabe lo que le pasa. Algunas veces los queman o los enterran,

Cuando me trajeron a la cárcel no me pude aguantar las lágrimas. No me importa si alguien se rie de esto. Mucha gente piensa que el llorar es malo o es una forma de sacar todo el enojo, tristeza o alergia. Creo que algunas veces es bueno llorar.

Llorar es algo muy común y por eso no me averguenzo de decir que si he llorado por todo el daño que me han hecho.

Me denunciaron y me aprendieron por algo que no hice y eso me hizo sacar lágrima de tristeza. No te avergüeneces de llorar porque no es nada malo. Llorar sirve para desahogarte y sacar toda lo que tienes adentro de ti, sea tristeza o enojo. No sientas miedo en llorar. No hay nadie en el mundo que no haya llorado.

From The Beat: ¡Excelente expresión Nestor! Creemos que el castigo que tú crees que sea el indicado es nada más que el justo para alguien que comete estos tipos de acciones enfermas. Nos encanto la forma como expresastes el tema de llorar. Todos en este mundo hemos llorado, y creemos que no hay persona que no lo haya hecho. Hay mucha gente que no libra sus emociones cuando necesitan llorar y las guardan. Esto crea mucho más estrés, dolor, y tristeza. Esperamos que muchos se den cuenta que aguantarse el llorar no ayuda en nada. Se te olvido mencionar que también se puede llorar cuando algo hermoso nos pasa.

My Thoughts On Topics

I believe that the worst crime is to kill another person and the best punishment for those who commit such a crime should be to be in jail for a long time so they learn their lesson and stop doing bad things. They don't know the harm they cause to their family members and their friends.

Well, when a person dies, obviously, they don't know what happens to them. Sometimes people are cremated or they are buried.

When they brought me to jail, I couldn't hold back the tears. I don't care if someone laughs over this. Many people think that crying is bad or is a way to release one's anger, sadness, and happiness. I believe that sometimes it is O.K. to cry.

Crying is something very common and that's why I'm not ashamed to say that, yes, I have cried for all the harm that has been done to me.

They accused me and apprehended me for something that I did not do and that made me shed tears of sadness. Don't be ashamed to cry because it is nothing bad. Crying serves to help you cleanse yourself and release everything that you have within yourself, be it sadness or anger. Don't be scared to cry. There isn't a person in the world who hasn't cried in their lifetime.

-Nestor B2, SFYGC

From The Beat: Excellent expression, Nestor! We believe that the punishment that you believe should be set for these crimes is nothing more than what is just for those people who commit these types of sick actions. We love the way you expressed yourself on the crying topic. Everyone in this world has cried before at one point or another and we also believe that there isn't a person alive who hasn't done so. There are lots of people who do not release their emotions when they need to cry and they hold them in. This creates much more stress, pain and sadness. We hope that many realize that holding their tears in doesn't help at all. You forgot to mention that people could also cry when something beautiful happens to us.

The Happiest Day

My happiest day is every day. I'm just happy to be alive.

I remember a day when I was really happy. It was when I just learned how to ride a bike. My sister and my parents hated seeing me on training wheels, so they took them off. When they did that, I cried and told them to put them back on. So my sister decided to teach me how to ride, right there. And within an hour, I knew how to ride.

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a pretty good story. Have you ever taught someone younger than yourself how to ride?

Being Pregnant Means . . .

Being pregnant means that I am going to bring another life in the world that I will be held completely responsible for, someone else's life and I can't avoid it or take it back, and it for sure won't disappear over night.

I planned to get an abortion but I am too far along, and I would never give my baby up for adoption, so that leaves me with no choice but to become a mother in the next few months and all I can do is pray that only the best happens and becomes of my baby.

I never believed in planning out your life, but that's all you can do when you find out your gonna have a child.

-Mercedes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's right—when you bring another life into the world it's important to have plans and goals. Another important thing to remember is that your body and self is right this minute providing your baby's first home; that means you need to take care of yourself, be good to yourself and try your best to feel happy.

Ye Old Pirate Song

Chorus

An old pirate you'll never find
That's one that can't be found
An old pirate you'll never find
To many bullets to go around

Verse 1

I've seen bleeding skulls and shipwrecks
Old life I'll never see
Just black hearts and iron swords
And the cold bosom of the sea
Gold coins in cold fingers
Rum and sea legs for me
I'll take a knife in the eye
And a peg leg over being elderly

Chorus

Verse 2

Too many cannon balls, swords, and bullets
Too many monsters spit and fists
Too many gut jabs and backstabs
And the weak ones slit their wrists
Too much rum, gin, and whiskey
Too much beer, brandy, and greed
Satan shall never go hungry
As long as pirates are there to feed

Chorus

Verse 3

On the charred deck of a trade ship
Amongst the severed bloody dead
Me old captain raised up the gold
And this is what he said:
"Aargh! I'm getting on, me years just passing 33
A pirate to outlive Jesus
I thought this I'd never see"
So we raised our glasses and cheered him
And passed up the money sack
I toot a shot of whiskey
And I stabbed him in the back

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We can't tell if you're just having fun (Slug fun), or whether there's a more serious message here. One thing for sure, there doesn't seem to be any honor among pirates!

Life

Life is pain
For just a short gain
Through the years
We're drenched in tears
People live and then they die
Some live longer with no reason why
People take more than they give
This is how some chose to live
People birthdays pass and go
Rivers flourish from melting snow
With every day that slowly fades
A child is born and lost in play
People learn so we can teach
The stars are something kids dream to reach
The wise share lesson with the youth
Just as the ocean is deep and blue
Every day is filled with choices
Distracting us with inner voices
Right is wrong but bad is good
This is not easily understood
When we fall we learn to rise
Rocks are beaten by the ocean tides
The birds they soar through the air
Lost in tranquility without any care
But what is life to you and me
Is it a pool of tragedies
Is it one big catastrophe
Or is it dedicated to your majesties
That created land and the seven seas
There is only one way we'll see
Wait to greet your destiny
We all have a path laid ahead of us
But with each step can we trust
We must wonder if it's the right direction
We must separate truth from fiction
After we travel through the loops and bends
And we can see the inevitable end
We must make the most important decision
To keep going forward or just stop livin'

-The Wrek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is quite an amazing accomplishment! We have read it through more than once to pull as much meaning as we can from the deep thinking that produced it. If, as Socrates wrote four hundred years before Jesus was born, that "the unexamined life is not worth living," then your poem tells us that your life is very much worth living! You ask some very deep and probing questions (is life a series of tragedies or an attempt to reach majesties), but you also provide some deep and probing answers (separate truth from fiction). Your conclusion about the most important decision we have to make is precisely what Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote: "To be or not to be, that is the question." We hope your answer is "to be" because thinking like yours is as rare as diamonds. (It makes us want to ask the almost stupid question: "What's a man with your ability to reason doing in a place like this?")

Tired, So Tired

Man, keep it real. I always talk to myself. Life is nothing but pressure. Every otha day I'm ready to give up on myself. Hard times got me ready to give up. This juvenile hall shhh ain't sweet.

I'm finna go to the Mills and start a new program. I'm really tired right now, and I'm only 16. Tired ain't nothing good. I think about my family every night. It's stressful. I love my mom.

-Daddy Stoffice B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It makes us sad to read that someone as young as you is already so tired — and we know it makes you sad too. Glen Mills has some very good things going for it, and we hope you find those things and make them work in your life. You need and deserve a rest. Don't give up on yourself.

Killing Yourself Slowly

Life to me is valuable because a lot of people don't care an' die when there are people that don't want to die or pass away. So I think you should think twice before doing anything that would put your life in jeopardy. Even though you're not putting a gun to your head, representing the block an' 'hood is killing yourself slowly, putting yourself in a situation you don't know what you getting into.

-Ej B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, E.J. It is a tragedy that some people don't treasure this great gift that, once gone, cannot be returned. What do you think it will take to make young people realize just how valuable what they possess is, and not be so willing to lose it?

No Sé Que Vaya A Pasar Conmigo

¿Que onda homies? Ya saben quien soy. Pues mira que no me quise quedar en el Rancho porque no me gustaba estar allá y corri. Ese mismo día, me arrestaron en mi casa y ya tengo siete messes desde que me arrestaron.

Ahora no sé que ya va a pasar. Creo que me quieren regresar al Rancho y volver a empear mi programa pero la jueza dijo que no me va a regresar al Rancho. No sé lo que ya vaya a pasar pero le estoy pidiendo a Dios que me ayude a regresar al Rancho.

Quiero salir de aqui porque ya estoy cansado de estar preso. Ya pasaron siete meses. Mi novia me dice que me va a esperar. Quiero hacer mi vida con ella.

Quiero salir de aqui para conseguirme un trabajo, poder ayudar mi familia, poderme comprar un carro Impala, y poder andar con mi novia pasiendo. Ya no quiero andar metiendome en problemas. Quiero poder enseñarles a mi carnalitos algo nuevo. Un saludo a los Catrachos principalmente a los de Pedro Sula.

From The Beat: Esperamos que Dios escuche tus oraciones y que esta vez si puedas apreciar las cosas que la vida te ofrece. Hay mucha gente que depende de ti y deberias de buscar la manera como darles la mano. Durante tengamos nuestra vida, todo es posible en esta vida. Lo único que se necesita son los deseos grandes de hacer las cosas que nos proponemos. Para hacer estas cosas que tienes en mente, tienes que dejar muchas cosas a un lado. ¿Crees que puedas?

I Don't Know What Is Going To Happen With Me

What's up, homies? Y'all know who this is. Well, you see I didn't want to stay at the Ranch because I didn't like being there and I ran. That same day, I got arrested at my house and it's now been seven months since they arrested me.

Now, I don't know what is going to happen. I believe that they want to send me back to the Ranch and start my program over, but the judge said that she is not going to send me back to the Ranch. I don't know what is going to happen, but I'm asking God to help me return to the Ranch.

I want to get out of here because I am fed up with being locked up. Seven months have already passed. My girlfriend says that she is going to wait for me. I want to make my life with her.

I want to get out of here so I can get myself a job, be able help out my family, be able to buy myself an Impala, and be able to go out cruising with my girlfriend. I don't want to get into any more trouble. I want to be able to teach my younger siblings something new. I send my greetings to my Hondurean people, especially those from Pedro Sula.

-Jonathan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that God hears your prayers and that this time you are able to appreciate what life has to offer you. There are lots of people that depend on you and you should find a way to give them a hand. While we have our life, everything is possible in this life. The only thing one needs is the huge desire to do the things we intend to achieve. In order to make these thoughts that you have in mind possible, you need to put aside many things that are preventing you from succeeding. Do you believe you can do this?

Hoping

What's up Beat Within. It's me, Lil' Brown Boy again, sitting in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall. I went to court and was hoping to get out on my 18th birthday.

This is my third birthday being here, or in a group home. Man, probation is not even going to give me a chance to start a new life. They want to send me to an adult program. I'm not asking to get off probation. I just want to go back home. It seems that this place is my home, because I'm always here or in a group home. I see other people do worse stuff than me, and they go home. But I'm still here waiting to see what's next for me. I just hope to go to county and do the rest of my time. I mean I don't want to go, but I'm through with darn programs. I just want to do my time and get it over with. Well, to all - don't let anybody get you down. Alrato.

-Francisco, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: If this place is home, we bet it's not a home you'll be homesick for. Get out. Do whatever is required to get off probation. Don't worry about what other people have done, and been punished for. Your job is to do what's necessary to earn the kind of life you want.

Love Life

What is life? Life is something that everybody should love. If you think that life is bs, you need to wake up and really think why you think that.

Me? I love life. There are things that I have to see that I have not seen. Life is something to cherish and love to the fullest. Life is important. You should love life.

-Fat Rat B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you, FR. Are you cherishing your life as you think it should be cherished? If you know how important life is, why are you wasting it in here?

Wake Up

My life is good and everything but I make dumb choices to get some respect and the way I did it ain't coo'. I could of just got respect a different way.

I also need to think for myself, be my own man. Being in here is no joke you got to do things you are not used to like have manners. You got to be told when you can go to the bathroom and wear old clothes that somebody already wore. This ain't for me. I can't wait 'till I got back home and change my ways. I guess you can call this a wake up call.

-Ruben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It takes real courage to write something this honest. A lot of times even when we do something that we know was foolish we have a hard time admitting why we do it. You are obviously a smart young cat who is ready for change so stay focused. Oh, and manners are for everywhere, not just the halls, so take that as one more lesson learned.

Until Then I Dream

Most of the time I don't know what I'm doing. Most of the time I do. It seem like me and peers have hopes and dreams but our effortless tries set us back two spaces every time we take one.

But when I do make my dreams real, it's going to feel like the love between a mother and her child or the happiness when you make the winning jump and everybody in the room is cheering me on. So until the day, I dream.

-V-time B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That feeling of one step forward and two back can be very frustrating, so we hope it doesn't leave you feeling that it's not worth trying. It is worth trying, and even if each step is a small one followed by set backs, it's still a step. (They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step...) Tell us about those dreams that you keep you motivated.

It's Cold In The Streets

It's cold in the streets
But it's colder in a cell
Lookin at four walls
And a toilet that smells
No bail?

This ain't the life for me
I'm used to livin' large this ain't
Right for me

I like to blow trees and drink champagne
I like to walk the streets and do anything
But that's me

So I gotta stay out
The system is a twist

I gotta find a better route
I'm tryna get scrlled up, get milled up
I'm hella hungry I want my plate filled up
Man... I'ma hustla out here
It's young Nikki, I'm all up in yo' ear

Just the other day it really had me thinking
All these black men and women

Just sittin' up in prison
That's too much talent to go to waste
Young people catchin' case after case
Mom stressed daddy ain't there
Kids askin' why daddy don't care

I ain't no square, but I took it there
That system got my people and it really ain't fair
So to celebrate life we pop pills and shhh...
And get thizzed out I know you feel shhh...

We need to change, this place ain't cool
Get our act together, and get in school
But instead we stay goin' dumb, and actin' a fool.

-Furly Gurly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, once again you've blown us away. This is really quality stuff—you obviously have a smart head on your shoulders, but watch out for contradictions. You talk about getting your people's acts together and that going dumb and getting thizzed out aren't the way to celebrate, but you glorify drinking and smoking weed in the first part of the piece. Otherwise this is some great work.

I Ask Myself Questions

When I talk to my inner self, I ask myself questions, like: What are you going to do with your life? — since I'm getting released soon.

Do you really want to keep dogging all these females, knowing you are going to have a daughter one day? Do you want to play basketball or do music? Are you a jerk or a gentleman? Are you a follower or a leader? Are you sure you want to knock him out and go in his pocket? Do you really want to steal this car? Do you really care about what the next person thinks about you?

Do you want to have to look over you shoulder every thirty seconds? Do you want to be nervous every time the police circle your block? Are you a child of God or a spawn of Satan? Do you really love her? Do you really want to break her heart? Do you really want to lose something good? Do you really want to hit that without a rubber? Ha, ha — on some treal shhh, ask yourself these questions.

-Brah Dummy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now you can take each one of these questions, make it a topic, and write us lots more pieces for the pages of our 'zine. These are important questions to ask, and even more important to answer well. So, yeah, we hope our readers ask these questions, at least enough to slow themselves down when they're about to jump in and drown. But, now, how do you answer?

I Wonder...

I wonder what if I could stay away from the hall and
just play ball,
not walk down the hall punching people.
I wonder what freedom really means?
Is freedom something everyone had or is it
something few have?
I wonder about things and don't always get a
response.
I wonder will mom's words "Santa, Rita, to San
Quentin" really come true.
I say no way but I will one day find out.

-Soane, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't forget that you have a big say in your life. If you don't like the sound of your mom's prediction, then turn it around. The power's in your hands. Don't want for someone to save you. Decide.

Giving Up

My soul is lost far away from me
My heart is death
Bleeding to be...
He who believed... given up not on others... but me...
Suicidal... basically in real life
In killing myself slowly,
The reality of three strikes,
Running from my freedom instead of getting to it.
I give up...
I gave up all my life just to go back.
I'm not really ready to change until my heart speaks
to me.
My mind is playing so many tricks on me
I've given up.
While I reflect on paper
I reach to no nature.
I've given up my tears.
I've given up my past.
No longer want to talk about it
'Cause I'm in my past.
Dream for my future but
I've given up on life,
Everything,
Even on myself

-Lil' Mainy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece takes you on an emotional roller coaster, through the highs and the lows of figuring out how to make things work. Giving up is just one of many options and we know someone as smart and talented as you isn't ready to throw in the towel yet. Oftentimes people think of giving up as taking your own life but giving up can mean giving in to drugs, peer pressure and violence. It can mean not trying hard because there doesn't seem to be a point. We all want to give up at times but we have to find something to keep us going.

I Like My Life

Life is good to me and I like life and while I'm in Juvenile hall I have to handle my time like a man and bounce back. And when I get out I want to never come back.

To all young bra's out there who are savages, use your Beat mode for somethin' else besides tryin' to be hard because this is where it gets you, just use your talent fo' somethin' like rapping. As youngsta's we've seen too much on these streets, I gotta go but use this program The Beat Within because it go.

-Josh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The Beat thanks you for the compliment and we hope all the folks reading your words take up the offer to use The Beat to find inspiration for your talents.

My So Called Life

A gangster's life is like a rush that you can't control or explain. It just is there. It feels so good just posting on the block, kickin' it with the homies, listening to the oldies and drinkin' forties — you just want to do it all day!

But you can't. Because other gangs and police won't let you. If a rival gang sees you, they will try to shoot at you. If the police see more than four Mexicans posting, they will stop and mess with you to see if you have a gun. But still we do it because of that rush we get from posting on the block, just living the life is fun! You get this reputation; and people start to know you; and your name gets known — it makes you feel good.

But me, I did not want to be a gangster. I had no choice! It started with that lie, and kickin' it with the homies. It was fun at first. It was just a thing to do. But one day I got caught up in some shhh, trying to help another homie. I got myself sliced in the face, and that is how I got the name of Scarface. But after that day, the homies said that I was down and that they wanted me to be "from the block". With nobody to tell me different, I said yes.

And that is how it started. So they gave me a belt, a rag and a gun; and said to hold down the block! So I did what I had to, for those months. And then one day, the homies said, "He is ready." And I got jumped in that day. It was coo'. But I started to see this was not the life for me. Then I got used to it, and now it is!

Because of that rush, I like just posting on the block — because you don't know what can happen at any given time. I don't know, I guess I'm just going to live a gangster's life to the end.

-Lil' Mosco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You explain "the rush" that keeps you posted on the block pretty well. And we can see that you are addicted to that rush. You had a moment of sanity when you saw that this was not the life for you, but like any addict, you just kept on chasing that rush and eventually got used to all the bad things that come along with it. Being locked up will be another one of the things you get used to, until you find yourself walking the yard in the Pinta, posting up with the homies, still chasing that rush. But you know, it doesn't have to be that way. As with any addiction, it is hard to stop, but if and when you do, everything changes. Sanity returns, and with it a lot of pain as you accept responsibility for what you've done. But then, if you stay stopped, your life starts getting better. Better and better, as one day at a time, you move into that future you no longer believed was possible for you. Don't trade away your whole life for that rush, or you'll be sorry.

This Life

What's up, Beat? To start off, I want to say what's up to all that read this and all who know me. Now down to business. Well, I don't know what life is, but I could tell you what kind of life I live. I live the life of a cholo (gangster).

This life ain't the best of lives, but I was raised into gangs. My whole life I've been around gang violence. When I was little, I used to post it up with the older homies. Ever since then, I always wanted to become a homeboy for the barrio. I started getting older and older, and I started banging even more.

This life is no easy life. You need to hustle to get money, and you need to shoot to survive. Posting on the block is coo' but five-oh stays messing with us. The rival gang members try to creep through the block, but they always get shot at. I confess that I also get a rush being what I be and doing what I do. Well, I'm out. That's all I got to say till next time. Oh, and I just want to say what's up to all.

-Big Will, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's tough to see when you're a little one looking up to the older homies (who are just youngsters a little older than you), where it all leads — walking the yard in a penitentiary, still putting in work for some "older gangster" who's calling all the shots. You've lost everything (family, your girl, any chance at a normal life) but your gang affiliation. You've traded away your life for that, what, that rush you get facing danger and calling yourself a soldier. We know you get respect from the homies, but it's better to get respect from your children ... the kind that has them growing up to be safe and free, not chillin' like a villain in some penitentiary. It's time to take a stand, stop kickin' it with the boys, get a job and make your money like an honest, working man. Break the chain and show others how to escape the pain.

A Reflection of All of Me

I would put copies of my bad records that I had earlier in life in my time capsule. Then I would put all my good achievements so people will be like, "He made a few bad mistakes earlier but look he made a quick change and now he is successful."

I would also put an autographed Allen Iverson ball in there because he's my favorite person and basketball is my favorite sport. I'd put my high school diploma in there to let people know that I went to school and graduated.

-Lil' Dewey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like that you want your capsule to reflect all of you, the good with the bad. In order to know where we are going we have to know where we've been and sometimes those places aren't exactly what where we would like them to be but they are real. Speaking of real, real, long lasting change is never quick - it always takes time. We want change to be quick, especially when we feel like we are so ready for it, but it never is. We know you are ready and capable of being the man you want to be. So time to stop talking and start doing.

Another Chance, I Hope

What's up Beat? Lil' Brown Boy, again, still sitting in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall, waiting for my next court date. Hopefully I will just have to stay here for 30 more days and then get to go home again. And hopefully, this time I'll stay out of this place. I had my 18th birthday here in juvy.

If I get the chance to go home, I'm going to do many things differently this time. Because next time, it's County, with the big boys. I have many homies, but I think there are better things to do outside. Like going out with my girl and spending time with my family, and doing the things I can't do now because I'm in here doing time. Well, that's it for now.

-Francisco, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes, there are many, many things, many good things to do on the outs. It takes a bit of will power to avoid the old temptations. But the results are worth it. Perhaps you've learned that this time.

*I have many homies, but I think there are better things to do outside**What Is Life*

To my knowledge life is growing like an individual does; learning from his/her mistakes, as they make them. Every life is unique in a way, no matter what, good or bad. To know life you have to see life; to see life you have to be life. Saying such means knowing that his or her life has a purpose.

Life is a multi-tasking experience; you learn how to be independent and by yourself but never alone in the world. Life is a progressive state in which a person strengthens his/her spirit in many different ways. Knowing ones self is life; life is you knowing what you are. Life is everyday life and everyday life is lost. I must say life is a beautiful thing no matter what shape, color, race, or form!!!

-M, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Deep - we like this one a lot. You got philosophical on this one and definitely made your readers take a step back and think. Life is made up of so many different things and each life, for better or worse, means something. You offer some powerful insights into why we are here and how we can make it work. Take some of this knowledge and toss it into your own life (that is if you haven't already)!

My Time capsule

I would put my wrist band from juvenile hall in there and a picture of my family. I would put my favorite rapper album like Tupac, Mistah Fab and Young Jocc.

I would put a sack of weed in there so they know what we smoke back in the day. I would go around the hood and take pictures of it, so people know what it looked like back in the day.

-Aaron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do you think life will be like when your time capsule is opened?

Life

Life is a lesson,

One that many have failed.

Life is an expedition,

One that many may never know.

Life is a story,

A story that few shall show.

A life lesson comes from years of expeditions, mysteries, and knowledge of many life stories in history.

-Dwayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece chalked full of wisdom. Your poem shows that simplicity can be just as powerful as some of the most complicated of works. Life is full of so much - don't you think it's time you stop coming here and start living it?

Is This My Life?

Is this my life or has my life been put aside?

Why do I feel like I want to hide?

At times I feel it's necessary to cry,

But with no reason why.

Maybe because this is not my life!

It's yours, in my life I don't wake up sore not knowing what for.

Everyday I wake up in jail

Feeling like all my bad deeds are going to send me to hell.

But it's been 17 years and not one real plan - it makes me sad.

I was always taught to say I can

And if I give my word, then take it because I'm a man.

Saying I can is the reason I feel like I've been hit.

Somebody turned their back on me.

I don't know who it is so I threw all of them away.

Now I feel lonely.

This can't be my life -

Where is my wife?

Where is my child?

When will I get that chance to live a life worth wild.

I think that's the word.

I have so much I want to say.

I talk to God because he understands that's why

I do my job as a Christian and pray

I'm gone have a nice day.

Once again is this my life?

-Heem, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is powerful writing that came from a place deep inside of you so we know it wasn't easy to share and we thank you for doing so with us. It is clear you have been through a lot, more than seems fair. And though it might sound harsh at first, you have to realize this is life. We all have to figure out ways to deal with what's been put before us - sometimes we take the easy way out and do things we aren't proud of. Sometimes we step up and truly deal with our problems. It sounds like you have done both, which makes you like every other person on this earth. Don't be too hard on yourself, we all make mistakes, but now you know better. Now you can see that this isn't the life you want to live, this isn't the kind of man you want to be. When we are young it feels as though time is always running out too soon but you have time. The wife, the family, the settled feeling that usually comes from being around for years can still be yours. Be patient, work hard, be true to yourself and things will work out.

Behind These Walls

What's up Beat? It's the real Ally-Bo from those Hayward streets. I just want to start off by telling these kids that this life ain't cool. One of my homies, Teddy, just got shot and he just had his first baby. I heard he's in ICU and doing good but I know it's hard for his baby's mother to go through parenthood the first couple of weeks as a mother by herself.

Another reason why this life ain't cool is because the supervisors just put us on lock down. Just stay up and out don't strike out. Much love and respect - keep your head up and let's get through this.

-Lil' Ally-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you pointed out in your piece, the game has many consequences and losing is usually involved, be it your life, your freedom or your ability to be there for the people you love. It breaks our heart to think that Teddy is missing out on these key moments in his child's life. He should be with his baby and the mother but instead he is sitting in a hospital bed. It doesn't make sense and there is nothing to say except folks have got to start doing better and think about what are they doing to themselves and the people close to them. We hope he makes it and gets his second chance.

Time Capsule: Who I Am

If I was to put some of my belongings into a shoebox and bury it, I would put a rag representing my gang and a pistol in it. Then people would know that I was a gang member in my time.

I would want to put money in the box, too, so they would know that yo' boy got money! If someone dug up this box and opened it in fifty years, they would know I was an outlaw. I would put a pic' of me in it, too, just to let them know what I look like being who I am.

-Lil' Spanky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd like to imagine that it's you who opens the box in fifty years, long after you've left your gangster days behind. Surrounded by your grandchildren, you can tell them the stories about how you lived and almost died before you finally saw the light and stepped out of the darkness of a gangster's life. Maybe you'd say, "And when I buried that gun, I never bought another one. That's why your grandpa is here today to help you grow up the right way."

Am I Ever Gon' Find My Love?

am i ever gon' find my love 'cause it's sure hard
husband and boyfriend commit a crime and get locked
up in bars

leaving the lady with the baby that is soon to come
man come out ten years later doing the same shhh
now he on the run

i know i can't run for the rest of my life so i ain't gon'
try

why get caught in the same situation and let my mom
drop tears and cry

'cause if i love a lady i'm'a yell from the top of my
lungs

no disrespect to t-pan but he really gon' say he sprung
but i respect that from soul and mind
to all you cats out there

don't support you and yo' lady by being on the grind

-Julian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got your heart, mind and soul working together to heal and grow whole! That's what it takes to keep a mother from dropping tears of grief, and also to keep your lady and you both up off the street — 'cause you know those streets lead you to where you're trying to go: locked up behind bars waiting for your loved ones to drop you a post card. Leave the grind behind, 'cause you need your freedom to shine!

I Wonder

Sometimes I sit in my room and wonder
if I walked the other way or took the other road
maybe I wouldn't be in here right now.
I had a decision to do what I did and took the wrong
road. Sometimes I have a choice to make
a good one or bad one,
most of the time I do the wrong thing
because it's probably going to be more interesting or
fun. Even if I do know it's the wrong thing I still do it
just for the adventure.

-Tiffany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Think of what an adventure doing the right thing could be. You already know where the "wrong things" lead you—doing something different could be really exciting in a whole new way. Sometimes it just takes opening your mind to different ways of thinking.

A Lil' Something About Life

I think life is about having responsibility and doing things when you have to. For an example if you are going to have some fun with a girl, you don't wear a condom and she gets pregnant, man got to take responsibility for that baby.

Life is about taking care of business. Here's another example: if you are 18-years old and it's about that time, you take care of business by going to get a job. When you get that job don't go and spend it all on junk you want, go get some stuff that you need. If it's a good job you can move out your moms and pops house, get it together and not doing stuff that will mess your body up like crack, weed, and all that other stuff does. That's about it for me. I'm out.

-Stone Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are right - life is all about choices. Sometimes it's easy to see what you need to do and sometimes it's a little trickier but either way the choice is yours. By taking responsibility for your choices you are showing the world that you are an adult because that is what adults should do - make the best out of any situation and handle his/her business. We hope that you are applying your advice to your own life. We know that you and your girl were going through a lot and even though you couldn't be with her, you were doing what you could from where you were. We also know that you just lost someone close to you, which is never easy. Stay strong and keep your head up.

"What Set You From?"

I'm a certified gangsta, raised in East Pomona (L.A.) and Inglewood (L.A.). Now I stay in Oakland. I was recruited to a set when I was ten and been bangin' ever since. It used to be fun getting locked up, but you finally get tired of it.

Lots of my patnas and cousins died off of bangin'. Some people think it's a game. It ain't no game if your life is on the line, posted on the block, watching your back all day for rival gangs. Everyday people asking you, "What set you from?" Just because how you look, people scared to say hello now!

Man, you get released but OG's try to put you back on line — just walk away! Simple as that! Get a job. Make clean money not dirty money. You feel me? Don't snort that white, stick to purple and that blueberry yum. Keep you away from trouble. Ride by police, no worry, 'cause you know you done nothing wrong, looking back at them like this: "Outer there, boy!" Different color, one people: Uso.

-Tonga Yung Uso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's some pretty good advice you offer here, and we know it's coming from someone who has learned from experience. We hope our readers feel your words and follow your advice about walking away from trouble and about making clean money. We hope they feel the joy and truly deep freedom of driving past the police with "no worry, 'cause you know you done nothing wrong." No worry in the hearts of those who love you!

Broken-Hearted

Jt: Why did you cheat on me?

girl: Baby, I'm sorry.

Jt: Sorry, my ass!

girl: Can you please give me another chance?

Jt: Give you another chance? Girl, you hurt my feelings! Can't you see that?

girl: But, baby —

Jt: Girl, I ain't never did anything but put a smile on your face and took care of you. And this is how you repay me?

girl: Baby, I was afraid you was going to break my heart.

Jt: I told you I wasn't like all of them other ninjas, and you still think I am!

girl: No, I don't.

Jt: Yes, you do!

girl: Why are you crying JT?

Jt: Because I loved you, and it's like you don't give a shhh

girl: I didn't say that! You're putting words in my mouth!

Jt: I puttin' shhh in shhh!

girl: Don't go! Don't go, baby!

Jt: Give me one reason I should stay.

girl: Because I love you!

[To be continued.]

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hear the pain and the confusion on both sides of this little dramatic sketch or dialogue you've written. It sounds like there is love on both sides, but so much pain in the past and the present that the love fears to abide, so runs away to hide. It's a sad tale. We wonder where it will go when you write part two.

What Is Life?

What it don't do, after shift change Beat? I'm still in here for a few mo' but I'm solid.

"Life is like a box of chocolates you never know what you're gonna get." -Forrest Gump.

"Life a B, then you die." -Tupac Shakur.

Right now I feel like Pac, in the situation I'm in right now, because when worst come to worst and when best comes to best, the only thing I can say I have is, that time to see the present and I can see my past.

All I can do is dream about the future, just for the simple reason that I'm not guaranteed tomorrow. I know my words are harsh but where I'm from I could walk outside and get hit with a bullet. Bullets don't have a name on them and it don't matter who got my back, they ain't got my back to take my bullet. All I can say is that I'm-a stay solid, stay Kosher and stay up out of here.

Rip to everyone who has passed. Everybody that's locked up, stay on ya toes, solid.

-Arllillian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Arllillian, why do you think that your life is the way it is? What is the purpose of your life? Your life is not doomed to go down the road you see in front of you. You have the power to take your life where you want it to go. But you must get a clear vision first, otherwise you will only follow what you know, which is what brought you here in the first place. Think about it. You are too young and too smart to give up.

Talkin' To Myself

Sometimes I be talking to self because I'm mad maybe, even sad or maybe even glad. Sometimes I'm disappointed that I'm here with some of my peers and I open up my ears and listen to some of them, and do dirt. Now, I'm here.

Listen to my words: go to school and be a nerd, or just smoke purp and pop bottles and throw yo' life away. Play sports or something quiet. Get a job instead of robbing people, get knowledge and go to college—that's it.

-Lil' Damani, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice. Great advice. What will you do with the rest of your life Lil Damani?

Anger Problems

I be in school thinking, cool people say look at the little girl she's acting a fool. Sometimes I sit and think to myself why do I have so much anger problems. Why do I blow out a lot why do I have so much attitude?

I just really think to myself like I can't continue to have so many problems in my life like this and keep coming back and fourth to jail.

People ask me everyday, why do I act like this, why do I have so much anger problems. And I tell them that I grew up with a bunch of angry people, I get it form my mama. But now I am trying to calm down because I am realizing that by doin the things I do, its not gon' get me nowhere but back here and I don't want to keep coming here.

This is not the place for me. I'm too young for this environment I am not a bad person, I am actually a good girl. I just have a lot of anger that I am working on. The end.

-Marquilla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Marquilla, you sound very mature and you recognize your problem, that's the first step to recovery. We know that you are a good person, you're just making some bad decisions. Work on your anger management and think before you act.

What's Life?

Well, I think that life mean a whole lot because I only got one life to live and you only get to be young one time. Life is very important to me 'cause I got a whole lot to learn about being responsible, learning to not let people's words get me in trouble and to control my anger. Life to me is getting an education and accomplishing your goals that you have set for your life.

-Cedes GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Getting your education is the key to accomplishing your goals. What are the goals you've set for yourself in life?

Question and Answer Myself

i ask myself questions and then i answer myself

am i crazy — no i'm just locked down and curious

sometimes i laugh but i'm mostly serious

my personality changes from time to time

did de'angelo p really commit this crime

i don't think so — he's innocent 'till proven guilty

i talk to myself 'cause my mind is positive and filthy

i think if i talk to myself i'll get a better answer

just because i smoke so much will i have cancer

i don't know but when i ask a question — i always answer

-D-Lo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Smoking doesn't always lead to cancer, but the criminal life does always lead to disaster, whether in by hand of the law or the gun in the hand of a gangster. Keep asking yourself real questions, but filter out the answers that make suggestions on the filthy side of your brain — 'cause that's what really has you living in chains, asking yourself if you'll get another chance to live free again. When you do, don't waste it on some filthy plan. You'll succeed when you take a positive stand, think and act like a free man!

What I Have Learned

I have been locked up for a week and a half, this is my first time in juvenile hall. When I was arrested I thought that the cops were about to let me go like they always do but I guess this time was different. Now I'm sitting here wishing I never did what I did but it's too late.

What I do know is I am never coming back for nobody. You learn to appreciate the things you have when you no longer have them. I don't know what else to say cause there taking the pencil away from me...

-Young Wake Up Call, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We imagine that coming to the halls for the first time is a real trip but you learned a hell of a lesson that we hope you always carry with you. Luck, like a lot of things of life, always runs out. We all make mistakes and as long as you learn from those mistakes, you haven't really lost. Be a man of your word - make this your first and last trip to the halls.

Lies

I been in here and something that I've seen in here a lot of people lying to make theirselves feel good, or something. I think people be lying to make people think they are things they're not.

Why would someone lie to make someone feel they are something they are not? That's some other shhh to me. just be cool and stop lying, and if you cat stop, just try. A man should not have to lie. If a man does something, then he should not have to hide it.

I hear so many young kids talking about, "I'm a man," but really not. Try to be a better man.

-QBB B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's the nature of boys at the edge of adulthood to try to portray themselves as men before they truly know what that means. How could they? They're still kids in many ways. But don't be too harsh on them. We all grow at our own speed.



Gave Up Selling

What made me give up is trouble. Everything that youngstas do today is trouble.

You don't always got to be hard. Long as you know what you're all about. That's all that matters.

People these days will just do something and not know what they doing it for. That's why I gave up selling dope and going on knockout missions. I don't know why I was doing it. I had a lil' job on the side. I knew I could get down.

People might think I'm soft for speaking the truth. But I ain't trippin'. That's just how I get down.

-Lb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You sound the opposite of soft ... frankly, you're talking like a real man. You've written over and over again about everything you have to live for - your girl, your dreams of the future, your plans for a family. If from now on, this is for real the way you plan to get down, you're on your way to getting up!

Come Back To Me

Hey, this is Uriel. Just chilling, killing time. Doing time, not letting time do me. To all those getting out - do some stupid stuff so you will be here with me. So we can do time together, go on, do some stupid stuff. I dare you.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a pretty good warning, and saying it in a new way. Very effective.

Untitled

Sitting here depressed
Trying to get this stuff
Off my chest.

Just don't now how I think
Of it now

Why do I live this way
Having to watch my back everyday

Gangbanging in the bay

Hayword is where I stay

Living in the hood

Always up to no good

That's how I earned my name

La Traviesa I remain the same

Stuck in the game

Wondering who to blame

Staying in the streets

Smoking methamphetamine

Blowing trees with my homies

Staying G'd up from head to feet

Trying not to end up six feet deep.

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece! We think instead of looking for who to blame you should look for a way out—there are people who can help you with that, but you're the only one who can initiate a new way of life. Good luck.

My Name Is Lil' E

Man this here Lil E. I grew up in a rough neighborhood. It ain't that rough, it's just that I like money and I'll do whatever I gotta do to get the dollar.

Can't be broke, can't be starving, feel me? I ain't no Cosby kid, I didn't have no silver spoon in my mouth. My name is Lil' E, not Theo. I got a chance at school but the school I went to made me want to get more money, so that's what I did.

Get yo' money, don't play ... I learned my math skills, addition and subtraction and division, from razors and hot plates so to there - add it up and make an estimate.

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: OK, if you're so good at math, then tell us this: If you add up the money you earn selling, now divide it over all the days you don't make a penny on lockdown. Now add whatever fines you're accumulating in jail. Now add however much money in salary your family members lose when they miss work to come to court dates or visiting. Now (since we can tell from your writing style that you're smart) you have to also remember that the amount of time spent in school is linked to earning potential in the future. So long term, every minute of school you make makes you a less valuable earner in the future. Oh, and let's add in - no health insurance, no paid vacations, and no 401K. Use your math skills for real, Lil' E, and you'll find out that you're not making squat.

I Try to Stand Strong and Tall

Trapped behind these walls ain't no joke.
 It have you thinkin' 'bout things that's going on outside
 this place.
 Make you rub your face in disgrace.
 Just thinkin' 'bout your family and the crime that you
 did.
 Makes you think about the wrongs and the rights
 Just make you sleep at night.
 But you try to be as strong as you can to prove that you
 are a man.
 But me I'm stressin' right now, because I have a little
 girl
 And man, she is my whole world.
 I would do anything to get out this place, just to see my
 baby girl's face.
 The only thing I can look at is her picture, which brings
 me to tears
 I been in here for a month, but it feels like a year.
 But I will try to stay strong and stand tall
 While I'm trapped behind these wall.

-Resse, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Stand strong and tall the way these words do, both now
 and when you get out, so you can be with your little girl and show her
 the way.

There Is A Girl

There is a girl and I don't know her name.
 But she just lies and lies and lies.
 Sometimes she just doesn't know how to get the
 truth out,
 she is so caught up in her own lies.
 She believes herself.
 She doesn't get along with anyone because they know
 she lies.

-Christina, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sounds like she could use a good friend, someone
 who could tell her the truth. People recognize the truth when they
 hear it, even liars.

What I Want

Life is whatever you want it to be.
 First you have to know what you want in life.
 Because if you don't know what you want in life you
 don't have a life.
 That's what I think.
 The high point in my life is success.
 I want to be successful.
 I want to get rich
 so I can get my mother the dream house she always
 wanted,
 and to get her enough money so she will never have
 to work ever again in her life.
 I feel that I owe her my life.
 I hope to be a pro football player, or a rapper/
 producer for music and movies.

-Damion, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We admire this love and loyalty you feel for your
 mother. And it's good to see you have big dreams and ambitions. It's
 a trip though, how so many young people see pro ball and music as
 their two choices for success, when there are so many other great
 jobs out there. All it takes is some schooling and patience, but you
 could also be a teacher, a heart surgeon, a counselor, a construction
 worker, a plumber, a journalist, a pilot, a taxidriver, a dentist, a
 director, a choreographer, a computer technician, an architect, a
 coach, an accountant, a cameraman, a graphic designer, a building
 manager, a carpenter, a chef, a baker, a sales rep, a politician, an
 engineer, a mechanic, a painter, a waiter, a web designer, an inventor,
 a gardener, a chemist, a banker, a coffeshop owner, a dog trainer...
 the list goes on and on. What kind of things are you most interested
 in?

To Myself

The real me is, I'm a "to myself" dude.
 If I don't know you I won't talk to you that much.
 I'm a to myself guy.
 I'm also thoughtful too,
 I'm also mean when you get me that way.
 I just make stupid decisions sometimes,
 but the reasons I get in trouble is just for dumb stuff.
 But when I get out, I'm going stop my bad decision making.
 I'm not coming back to jail, though.
 I'm going to lay low and come to church.
 Because I feel I haven't had God in my life in a while.
 What does that mean?
 It means that I'm going to accept God into my life and
 become a Christian
 so I could ask Jesus to come into my life and watch over
 me
 and wash away my sins and forgive me for my bad doings.
 Because I'm really mad for what I have done, and it's a
 shame for my case that I did.
 I hope Jesus will forgive me, and I'm not demanding this
 prayer,
 I am asking for him to forgive me. Amen.

-Andrew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What's your favorite part of The Bible so far? Is there a
 particular verse that helps you figure out best what you want? When you
 look at the temptations and troubles you face on the outs, do you ever ask
 yourself, what would Jesus do?

RIP Tim

What's up with it Beat! I'm here to talk about my ninja Tim.
 Somebody took him out over some small shhhh. My ninja
 wasn't giving up his shoes or his money, so they smoked
 him.

Man, Tim was always quiet, feel me. He never done
 nothing to nobody. He always stayed on his own hype. He
 stayed on his grind but he did it solo. You would always
 catch him by a church early in the morning before he'd
 start in the morning, feel me? Tim really was trying to get
 out the game, but money just kept coming his way.

My ninja would have been something right now, man.

-Lb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about this. The streets are so dangerous
 now, that even if you're NOT in the game you still run the risk of getting
 hurt. But if you are in the game, fulltime or partime, it seems that a bullet's
 bound to find a way. We are sure Tim didn't deserve such a terrible fate.
 Neither do you. Does losing him make you feel more or less committed to
 changing your own life? Change in his name!

When I Talk To Myself

I be feeling good
 Because shhhh I did not even know about me
 I found out
 And when I be up in my cell
 I just be thinking about shhhh I be doing on the outs
 In thinking about shhhh that make me laugh,
 An' I just be talking and the staff be walking by
 Like stop talking
 I just be talking about what I did to get here
 Why I put my hands on the staff
 That shhhh not good because
 Look what it did
 Got me away from my family

-Young Hitta GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: These conversations with yourself clearly have an important
 purpose. When you examine the things you did that took you away from your
 family, do you see ways to do things differently when you get out so you
 don't return? We hope so, and we hope you keep talking.

My Time Machine

I'm only 16, but I've been through only God knows what. Many years I've had to deal with all the abuse you could think of. I took me a long time to come out of my dark shadow of fear and loneliness, I'm still recovering from all the pain and suffering.

I lost my mother to the prison system and I won't see her until 2014. I lost my siblings to the foster system, now we're all split up. I'm in the Hall again after five months in a group home program that I almost finished. And I ask myself, "Where did I go wrong? To go further back, I use to watch my mother damn near get beat to death in front of my six year old eyes. I was then introduced to weed at six and a half. Ever since then I've gone up and down too many times.

In my time machine, I would want to put my life behind me. I want to be born again so I can start all over. I chose to be reborn through Christ and that's the start of my time machine.

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Makayla, we are so glad to hear that you are ready to start a new life. In this new life, what will change? What will you value most? What part of your life is going to start over? Who is the new Makayla? And what is she about?

Life

life is boring
life is sweet
life is spontaneous
life is hell
life is good
life is successful
life is god
life is painful
life is beautiful
life is downfall
life is thoughtful
life is grateful
life is thankful
life is pain
life is complicated
life is game
life is life
life is positive
life is negative

-Young Rick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, do we see you in every line of this poem. And the way the list flows from boredom to "life is sweet" through spontaneity (is that you or what?) to (ouch) hell ... which teaches you to turn to the "good ... successful ... god"! No escaping pain though, even if "life is beautiful"; you learned that from your downfall, which has at last made you thoughtful. Come to think of where you've been and what you've done, you're grateful and thankful to be alive, even in this life of pain. Yeah, it's a "complicated ... game ... life" — positive and negative. Choose.

Me And Me

Sitting here wondering what the hell did I do wrong?

Why do I choose to do the same shhh that lead me back to square one?

I ask myself these questions everyday to see what will come next. The last time I asked those to myself, I lived in Hayward. Now, I'm back in the Hall. Damn! But its coo' I'm-a be on my way out in a lil' bit. I know where I am. I know where I wanna go. The question is how will I get there?

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's right Makayla. Any answers yet? If you feel stuck don't have too much pride not to ask for help by those who care for you and want to see you succeed.

Cycles

When I was little, it was the same ass shhh going on, like you know getting money any way y they can. And the outcome of that was for some people is dead or in jail. When I was little I always wanted to be in the game, and look at me now, I'm here doing time.

-Baby Lou, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is your present but it doesn't have to be your future. We called the piece cycles, because with your usual sharp insight, you pointed out in just a few words how crazy these cycles are. If you grow up seeing people on the streets and hustlin', then that's the only way you know, so you follow in that path and get caught up in the same cycle of pain.... But now Baby Lou, the key word here is "know" as in "knowledge." With knowledge - of who you are, what you want, what you're willing to sacrifice for your dreams, how hard you're willing to work to find support for a change - then you CAN break that cycle.

When I was little I always wanted to
be in the game, and look at me now,
I'm here doing time

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm goin' to try start my life over. I'm goin' to go back to school. I'm not gonna say I'm gonna stop smokin', but I'm gonna try to stop smokin'. When I get out I'ma try to find that one nice girl, 'cause I don't want no 'hood rat.

I gonna still be on the block, but I'm not goin' to be doin' the same ass shhh. I gonna try to change my life around. Man, life is too important to be doin' the same ass shhh, fo' real, man, 'cause I'm tired of comin' up in this place. This place is not a good spot for a man. When I get out.

-Daddy-O B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have all the right intentions, but you lack a sound plan. Believing you can go back to the block without falling victim to the same temptations and dirt that goes on there is a trap. You may think you can go back and still do all the right things, but it doesn't work that way. You've made only half a decision to change, and that's not enough. Like you said, life is too important to be doing the same old same old that isn't getting you anywhere other than where you are right now.

Dreamin' of My Baby Girl

The best dream I had was last night. It was about my baby girl bein' born, and me was holding her and kissing her and my baby momma.

Just enjoying the moment with them was so special and it felt so real that my roommate woke me up. I was pissed off, I felt like taking off on him 'cause I woke up in The Hall.

Just can't wait to get out here and my dream comes true.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know what they say: If you don't got dreams you got nightmares. Let those good dreams about your loved ones be the light you look too when it gets dark in here, and when you fear losing your way.

Just For Today

You will feel tired and weak
If you pray then it's just for today.

You may feel happy or sad
But if you believe that it's just for today
You may need to recover from someone you lost
That pain will go on not just for today
I won't give up, I will keep goin
Hopefully, I won't say it just for today.

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From the Beat: Makayla, everyday you must wake up and be willing to take on new challenges. Even old challenges give us new obstacles. Just keep a positive attitude and know who you are, always.

For Sandra RIP

Pops is a gangsta
Moms was a hustler
Sold free base rock cocaine
And as a young one
Another one was bold
And took her life
But her blood is still pumpin' in me
And I cannot stop
I want to know God's thoughts
The rest are facts
And yes I'm back
One of the best in the beats
And please don't challenge me
Challenge denied
Can't copy me
I'm copy written
This is a mass description
Mass description
Influenced by no other
Dreamer, and that's me
And I'ma be me
I lost one but I still got one
It's June and I'm still crying
Sandra baby girl, I'm sorry
And it's not all good
Sandy gone
Live for her twin sister
Got you tattooed on my arm
To let you know
I really care

-Dreamer

From The Beat: We're sorry about Sandra's death, Dreamer, but there is another way you can honor and remember her besides that tattoo, and that is to live your life in a way that protects it from harm so that you can keep the memory alive for a very long time. What are your dreams, Dreamer? What's keeping you from achieving them?

This One Day

The day I laid eyes on you
I knew I wanted you to be mine
On that Friday Nevada made us intertwine
Your lips on my lips took all the pain away
You holding me in your arms
I felt I had much to gain
We walked the streets of EPA
We nearly got lost in our own place
The tears and broken hearts flew away
This is how you made me feel that one day

-No Name

From The Beat: We wish we knew who wrote this. This love poem is more than just a personal letter to someone you love, it's a beautiful description of the way love feels, the way it can enfold you and block out the ugliness that may be all around you. "The tears and broken hearts flew away." Oh, yeah...

Poky Bear

This is dedicated to the one
You know who you are
I just wanted you to know
That just because we're apart
Doesn't change anything
We'll be together soon, no worries
So stop acting shady
Sometimes you make me wonder
Do you love me?
I love you even though I don't show it
It doesn't mean I don't mean it
Trust me, you mean a lot to me
I think about you every day and every night
When I'm down you put a smile to my face
You know who you are
"My Poky Bear"

-Jessica

From The Beat: We certainly understand why young girls locked up would spend a lot of time thinking about boys and men. But sometimes we at The Beat get tired of reading these personal little love notes that would be better sent as a letter from you to him.

Nonconformity

"Conformity" means "being like everybody else." What bothers me is when the kid who isn't like everyone else gets labeled as weird! Just because they're unique and they follow their own beat, no one understands them. So for that reason, they're weird. These ignorant people think that if they don't stick labels on them like soup cans, they'll be weird.

Conformists are cowards, afraid of being different, like it's the ultimate sin or something. Most of the kids in here force themselves to listen to the same music and talk the same way and live the same lives. That's not who they are deep down inside! They're putting up fronts and being shallow and not being themselves. Is that what everyone calls "normal?" There's no way in hell I'd ever do that to myself. That's practically self-mutilation. I'm going to go ahead and be myself. There's a red rose in a field of weeds. I'm the rose. Y'all conformists are the weeds.

-The Scientist

From The Beat: We think you're being a little harsh on your peers, but we take your point. Obviously, The Beat answers to its own drummer, so we always encourage self-expression that is uniquely you. In your case, we don't have to encourage you. You're already your own person.

My Heartbeats

Starin' at the soon-to-be crime scene makes my heart beat
Knowin' that the spot will be hot, I do the dirt and be out on my feet

When we 'bout to get in wit' the enemy I'm quick to react
Someone will get very hurt and it's just a known fact
During the rumble my heart jus' beats faster and faster
But the adrenaline rush makes me feel as if I'm da master
I know dat when da day come my heart will beat no more
But for now I'll jus live the life with so much gore

My life is based on the dangers of the streets
And I'll do what it takes to make sure that my heart beats

-Victor

From The Beat: Well, your heart still beats Victor, but it is imprisoned inside your chest which is imprisoned inside four walls and locked doors! Is this how you want to live? What's the point of God's gift of freedom if you so casually throw it away? Can we ask you a question? If your city was attacked by aliens from another planet who threatened to kill everyone, would you join with your "enemies" to repel the attack, or would you continue to be divided and thus let the invaders destroy everything?

Most of the kids in here force themselves to listen to the same music and talk the same way and live the same lives.

Memories

I wish I neva saw your face
Because you left me your trace
I wish you neva made me weak in the knees
'Cause all I'm left with is memories
I wish I neva felt your kiss
I wish I neva felt this bliss
I wish you were here with me
But all I have now are memories
Right now you are with me
But it's only a memory
I wish I could let you go
But my feelings for you always show
I feel your spirit
I can almost hear it
I want you here with me
But you are only a sweet memory

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: Let's be blunt, Brown Eyes. The reason he is only a sweet memory is that you put something else above him; you apparently loved something more than him, because you weren't thinking of him when you gave the system the power it now has over your life — a power that includes taking you from him. The time to remember how much you love someone is when you are with them, so that you're not tempted to do the kinds of things that can have this result. Once you're locked up, it's too late for that love to keep you free.

Foggie Foggie Glass

Chorus X2:
Ooh...foggie foggie glass
Ooh...don't waste it, make it last

Verse:

Ring ring ring
Pick up that phone
Come on boys
Let's take the job on
I wanna start stylin'
But not just clothes
Drinkin' wine and dinin'
Come on let's do it
And let our skill show
But not just prove it
Everybody's got to know
We on top of the game
But we ain't in it fo' fame
Not fo' publicity or even bank
But simply for our love fo' crank
Chorus X2

-Lil' V

From The Beat: Were you letting your skills show when the police picked you up and brought you here? If becoming a slave (even temporarily) is the price for your "love fa crack," then love truly has blinded you. If you are still able to see, look around and see where you are!

What Bothers Me?

One thing that bothers me is when people say the "n" word. Especially "white people." I am not racist or anything. It's just that it's disrespectful and out of line. Some people say that it's in their category and that they can't stop saying it, but they turn around and get mad when we call them out of line. See people wonder why they get popped in the mouth, talking all that will get caught slippin'.

Another thing that bothers me is when people try to act black. They try to act ghetto with an attitude, fo' real, fo' real that ain't the business. I think we should let it be known for all those people who puttin' on a front. You can act black but you'll never be black, so get it right and stop snitchin'.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Where did that last bit of advice ("stop snitchin'") come from? What's it got to do with the "n" word or actin' black? Anyway, we think the reason people use that nasty word is out of their own ignorance of its history and power to harm people (and we even include black people in this category). We don't like responding to ignorance with a pop in the mouth. We'd rather see you try to replace ignorance with knowledge.

I Doubt It's The Blood in My Veins

You know what I do is kind of a mystery
I'm not blood with the parents I have now
I was adopted and born in a different country
So I can't say I got my traits from my parents
But the blood of my birth mom
I just think about it and forget it
But I really doubt that I'm the same
None of these relate to me
Maybe it's not the blood in my veins
'Cause I have no relation to a lot of my family
Maybe I'm on this different path
And destined to a different journey
But there is of course no one to blame
So I really doubt it's the blood in my veins

-Justin

From The Beat: We used that phrase more as a metaphor than as a literal definition. We doubt it's the blood in your veins, too, and it is the blood in your brain that we are much more interested in. You've got one (a brain, that is), and a very good one. It's past time to put it to the service of a decent life for you in the future. Unlike many, you have some gifts that you could use to move yourself out of this hall and this life that puts so much at risk.

Institution Dreams

I'm tired of being locked up even though I'm used to it.
I look back into my life and realize I suffered crucial hits.
Two more weeks maximum till I graduate the hall.
I don't know what I'll do to not live against the law.
I always reminisce but I rarely look ahead.
Tomorrow's never guaranteed for me.

I could be dead.

These institution dreams cloud my head so I look down.
And these methamphetamines wound up my town down to the ground
I found out two of my homies died from violence and stupidity
Lived a life of fighting, now they finally can rest in peace
I'm 18 years old by now an' kicked out of my house
But I ain't really trippin' 'cause I'll find my whereabouts

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We have very high hopes that you will find your whereabouts, Grumpy. In fact, we know that you are now out of Hillcrest, and we've had the pleasure of having you come to our office, even though it's not easy to get here from San Mateo. To us, that shows that you are serious about looking forward. We know the future must look a little intimidating — and especially since you're now 18 — but that is a challenge which you have the capacity to meet. We still hope you will consider college because it opens up possibilities that we're sure you've never even thought about. But whatever you choose, make sure it isn't the same old stuff that has robbed you of so much already in your young life! We're pulling for you.

My Love For You

I know it's been more than a year, pero aqui estoy, still missing you.
Still not over you. Now I'm here locked up and here you are too.
I'm so close to you, but still so far away from you.
Te extraño miijo. And shhh, if I got another chance miijo, damn I'll wait for you
Porque you were the best thing that came in my life. I miss you
And te extraño cuidate y keep it trucha. I love you cuervo.

-Morenita

From The Beat: If both of you are here, then both of you need to rethink the kind of lives you are living — or you'll just keep finding yourselves on opposites sides of thick walls.

I'm Sick

I'm sick of everyone, everything.
I'm sick of having people hate who don't even have a reason.
I'm sick of waking up in the morning
and looking at everyone's depressed and pitiful faces.
I'm sick of people putting others down just because their life is not going
right or they want to be a happy person like the people they put down.
I'm sick of waking up in a negative vibe.
I'm sick of never seeing smiles.
I'm sick of wearing others' clothes that's never the right size.
I'm sick of the food.
I'm sick of being locked in a stupid room.
I'm sick of hearing rumors and I don't know why they even exist.
I'm sick of hearing nothing but put-downs.
I'm sick of hearing, "Oh, she said she don't like you."
I'm sick of hearing, "You got an hour, come sign your ticket."
I'm just sick of everyone and everything.
I just wanna go home because I'm sick.

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: If you are as sick of all this as you say you are, then you will find a way to stay out of here! You don't mention any of the reasons why you are here, but it's related to your own choices, which means that if you continue to make those choices, you're really choosing to be here. And if you make that choice again, the obvious conclusion will be that you don't hate it here as much as you say. You give the system control over your life, then get sick when they take control. Make some changes. It's all in your hands.

The Best Summer I Ever Had

I remember the summer of 2004. It was the best summer I ever had. I was always in my street with my homies, kickin' it and doing desmadre. The summer of 2004 was when I started doing bad things. Every Friday we all went to a swimming pool in Redwood City and we had a lot of fun.

I wish I could go back in time to those fine days. Chale, I liked those summer nights, warm nights with the homies, just chilling in the driveway. Now I'm getting older and I'm missing all those times when I was younger. All I know is that the summer of 2004 was the best.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: We hope that the summer of '04 was just the best so far. You have many summers that lie ahead. Do what you know you must do to make them what they should become: sweet memories for your old age.

Tatuajes Invisibles

Todos tenemos tatuajes visibles o invisibles, pero el tatuaje que más duele es cuando tus padres no te apollan. Como una vez que se me descompuso el carro y le hable por telefono a mi papa para que me ayudara y me dijo que no me iba ayudar. Entonces esos son unos de los tatuajes que yo llebo adentro de mi alma y corazón.

Otros de los tatuajes que llevas adentro son cuando tu novia te engaña con tu mejor amigo, especialmente si querías mucho esa persona. Tenemos que reconocer que también nosotros marcamos tatuajes en los corazones de nuestros padres, como cuando caemos en la cárcel. Esto es una pena muy grande para los padres, especialmente para las madres. Las madres de nosotros siempre estan ayudando a los hijos en cualquier cosa, no importa que fue la razón, pero nos ayudan.

Otro ejemplo es cuando le marcamos un tatuaje a la mujer de tus hijos que seria tu esposa. Eso le duele mucho porque sientes que no la apoyas y las haces sentir que no te importan tus hijos. Por eso espero que nunca vuelva a pasar cosas como estas y pensar las cosas antes de hacerlas. También hay que tratar de no marcar tatuajes o que no marque tatuajes a nosotros. Es la mejor manera de vivir.

From The Beat: ¿Sabes la razón por la cual tu padre no te pudo ayudar? ¿Le preguntastes? Estamos de acuerdo contigo. Todos estos ejemplos que nos distes son Buenos ejemplos de las cicatrices que debemos procurar que no nos toquen ni dar. Tienes una mente muy abierta y cualquiera que leyera esto diria que has pasado por todas las experiencias y ejemplo que nos has dado. ¿O no?

Invisible Tattoos

We all have visible and invisible tattoos, but the tattoo that hurts the most is when your parents don't support you. Like one time when my car broke down on me and I spoke to my father over the telephone so he could help me, and he told me that he wasn't going to help me. So those are some of the tattoos that I carry inside of my soul and heart.

Other tattoos that you carry inside are when your girlfriend plays on you with your best friend, especially if you loved that person very much. We have to recognize that we also leave tattoos in the hearts of our parents, like when we end up in jail. This is a very shameful thing for our parents, especially for our mothers. Our mothers are always helping out their children in whatever, regardless of what the reason is, but they help us.

Another example is when we leave some tattoos in the woman of your kids who would be your wife. That hurts them a lot because she feels like you don't support her and you make her feel that you don't care about your kids. That's why I hope that these kinds of things never happen again and to think about what you are about to do before doing it. We should also try not to leave tattoos or let people leave tattoos in us. That is the best way to live.

-Juan

From The Beat: Do you know the reason why your father couldn't help you out? Have you ever asked him this? We agree with you. All these examples that you gave us are good examples of the scars that we should make sure don't touch nor we give to others. You have a very open mind and whoever should read this would say that you have been through all the experiences and examples that you have given us. Or are we wrong for assuming this?

We have to recognize that we also leave tattoos in the hearts of our parents, like when we end up in jail.

No More

I'm tired of these little-ass boys who think they got game and they can get me just like that. I'm tired of these boys who think I'm stupid when all they wanna do is hit it and quit it — and get mad when they can't get it. Then they wanna talk shhh and tell all they friends I'm a 'ho', but really they are the 'ho'es, because most of them will have sex with anything that walks instead of saving it for someone who's really worth it.

Don't get me wrong, there are some dudes out there who respect females and are really about something. But, for the dudes that aren't like that, you can tell that they are going nowhere with their life. I don't judge dudes who been locked up because we have our struggles in life and sometimes we gotta do what we gotta do, but how they treat females is what matters. So no more will I allow dudes to treat me with disrespect because I am worth more than what they expect I am.

-Elena

From The Beat: We have met too many young boys (and old boys, too) who behave towards girls and women just the way you describe, so we can't disagree with you. Some females feel so insecure and desperate to have a "man" in their lives that they even allow themselves to be hit — a sure sign that the "man" in their life is truly a child. Recognizing your own worth and respecting yourself for it should attract more mature men than the ones you are used to dealing with!

Deep Feeling

I always carry these deep feelings that I can't even explain or talk about. I wake up thinking where my jefita is, thinking how much she's been on her knees crying for her baby daughter. And I can't forget how much pain she's suffered. Just have a deep feeling I can't forget. All the things I put her through and all the times I made her look for me. Now I just have a big feeling that don't let me go or let me sleep.

-Tiny

From The Beat: You are suffering from guilt, a condition that you can overcome by changing the things you feel guilty about. You're right, you've put your mother through a lot, but all mothers go through a lot for their children. But there comes a time when the child grows, matures into a responsible person who understands the debt she or he owes a parent. We believe that in your maturity, you will find a way to give back some of what she has given you — and the best gift of all would be to stop doing the things that let strangers take you away from her.

Dear Brother

Many years have passed us by
Pain and suffering and all the cries
Passed around like a pair of shoes
Don't really care because there's nothing to lose
Living life like it's a dream
Waking up to the same old things
Mother and father can care less
They're happy with their new family
Because we are terrorists
Now that you're going to CYA
I can't bear the fact you're going away
I know it's not a place for you
But it's gonna be okay
We're both gonna get through
I love you bro with all my heart
Keep your head up...
Because it's just the start
Love,

-Dbo

From The Beat: The love and special bond you have with your brother shine through every word of this sad piece. We are sorry that your brother is on his way to the Y, just as we are sorry to see you in this place. But having each other should give you both the strength and support you need to succeed when you both are again free to be who you are. Stay strong because you can be of no help to him without first being a help to yourself.

Brotherly Love

(Dedicated to my Lil' brother Garrett)
Alright, baby brother, straighten up
You don't want to be in my position
If you were in here you'll be sucking on your thumb
I'm showing and telling you this ain't the place for you
And I know you wouldn't want to wear
These people's clothes and shoes
You must be on gooms and really hallucinating
You think it's cool to do what I've been doing
You walking the wrong path and entering the wrong party
Don't leave mom and dad at home hurt, writing letters and crying
Because I've done enough and I'm really hurt and ashamed
But I don't want you to mess up and do the same
I guess you can blame it all on me but open your eyes and see
That you're my baby brother and I ain't trying to have you hurt
And will love you 'till the v-e-r-y e-n-d

-Justin

From The Beat: What is so touching about this piece, Justin, is the belated realization that your younger brother has been modeling his behavior after yours. The old saying, "Do as I say and not as I do," has never worked. Children learn by what they see and not by what they're told. At the same time, we admire you for trying to spare your brother from having to experience the same painful consequences that you're now living with. We hope you succeed, but if he goes down that same road, just be there for him when he is mature enough — like you — to see that this is not the path he wants for himself. Then you'll be able to be the big brother role model he needs.

Not Worth It

Here I am in Hillcrest Juvenile Hall for assaulting somebody. I only did it because the person was talking some shhh to me and in the time I've been here I learned it wasn't really worth it. Even though that person probably won't talk shhh to me next time he sees me, it wasn't really worth it.

Because of these things that I have now realized rather than just ignoring the experience like I was going to do, I'm going to learn from it so the outcome of situations like this will be different. Now if something like that were to happen, I would just ignore whatever the person is saying and think about what would happen to me. I would remember that I would have to come back to Hillcrest and be miserable and probably spend even more time here than I did before.

And after all that goes through my mind, I would just walk off. That would be the end of it and I wouldn't be back in here.

-No Name

From The Beat: Whoever you are, this shows great maturity. We hope that you truly have learned what you say you've learned, because the momentary pleasure you might have felt for going off on someone talking "shhh" about you is more than offset by the long-term pain you're feeling by having to live with the consequences. The old saying, "Sticks and stones can break my bones but names will never hurt me," isn't exactly true, because names often do hurt us. But returning that hurt with violence only compounds the problem, and ultimately makes you hurt even more. We know that if you can control yourself in here (because you know the consequences of losing control), then you can also control yourself out there.

Dear Life

Coming at me so fast
Time's a ticking
Pretty soon I'll be the past
Watching my life unfold in front of me
I try to be all I can be
Living each day like it might not be there tomorrow
Staying clear of all the pain and sorrow
Throwing situations at me like a curveball
I can't help but overcome them all
Not going to let you slip by
With knowing that I didn't try
I hope I will have you for many years
Triumphing over obstacles with blood, sweat and tears
Life is a package with many twists
Some make me happy, others create a fist
Life's so short in the big scheme
Sometimes I think it's all a big dream
Seeing the importance of life is so easy
I love life and it loves me

-Dylan

From The Beat: We love that you love life, and that you're determined to overcome the obstacles she throws in your path. The interesting thing about it is that life does throw challenges at us, but it also provides us with the tools to meet those challenges. It does go by very fast, though, so what plans do you have to make the changes necessary to let you live yours in freedom and health?

Why So Much Killing

Bang, bang is the sound that we hear
Another man drops, and those gangstas show no fear
It is what it is

In these streets full of shhh
Crooked cops come through and mess up da mood
We hustle in these streets, so us humans could eat
Police come and creep, and put you in da backseat
Write a fake report

So it could show up in court
Now yo' lifetime is lookin' real, real short
You can't stop the gun smoke
In these streets full of brokes
Even if there was peace
That still won't stop the beef
If you wanna change then get down on yo' knees
And say, "God, please forgive my sins,
I don't wanna be another man ending up in da pen"
In this life you gotta win
There is no time to lose
Lift up yo' chin
Now homie you choose

-Chava

From The Beat: It seems like you're saying that there's no way to fix the terrible problems on the street, like crooked cops or gun-using gangsters, but that there is a way to fix yourself. When you pray to be forgiven for your sins, do you ever think of the individual victims of those "sins"? Have you changed the way you look at others, as well as how you look at God? In what ways — and how did these changes come about?

Life Wasted?

Sitting here in this eight-x-ten
Can't do nothing till staff tell me when
I refuse to live my life like this and feel like it's pretend
It's all fun and games but it gots to end

But change is hard and I'm trying to see
And trying to think is this what GOD wants me to be?
I really doubt it, I got everything to gain
Hope my destiny come soon to throw away the pain

Will I stay in facilities and waste my life away?
I'll be getting out soon so I'll start over on that day
Don't take my word on it but I'll be trying
Life wasted to be is a life that will never be mine!

-Justin

From The Beat: Refusing to let your past define your future is a sign of maturity, as is your obvious determination to start over. You ask if you will waste your life away in places like this, but you are the only one who can answer that question. Your thinking makes us believe that this will not be your fate, but time will tell whether you are true to your word or not. All we can do is hope...

The Price of Freedom

My life changed when my sister and I made the mistake of stealing fifteen-hundred dollars worth of clothes from a store. At that time my sister was 6-1/2 months pregnant. We were free to go but we had to go to court. We went, but never again. I ended up with a warrant and finally got picked up on it five months down the line. My sister and my nephew are free while I sit all day in an eight by ten cell.

Every day that goes by it feels like a year. Every morning I wake up wishing, praying that it is some kind of nightmare, wishing that I will wake up and be in my old room with the people I love. But every day is a disappointment. Now I'm paying the price with my freedom.

-Kenny

From The Beat: That's an expensive lesson, Kenny. But it will be far more expensive if no lesson comes with it. How will this experience change the way you do things when you get out of here?

Scared of Pain

Life is crazy
Like the water of the ocean
Calm at times and deadly with waves

Life can change quickly
Unexpected things are always
Going to happen

Nobody is immortal, everybody dies
I'm not scared to die, but I am
Scared of pain

-Anonymous

From The Beat: One way to become immortal is to write. Long after we have turned to dust, our written words live on. Don't stop writing!

Por Cabrón

Yo estoy en la cárcel por robar carros pero estoy arrepentido. Soy cabron. No le obedezco a mi mama y ella ya está cansada. Cuando salga de la cárcel me voy a portar bien y no va a ser nada duro para mí.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que despues de este incidente puedas obedecerle a tu madre a las cosas que te dice que hagas o no hagas?

For Being An Idiot

I am in jail for stealing cars, but I regret what I did. I'm an idiot. I don't obey my mother and she is already fed up. When I get out of jail, I'm going to behave better and it's not going to be anything difficult for me.

-Mauricio

From The Beat: Do you believe that after this incident you'll be able to obey the things that your mother tells to do and what not to do?

Switch It Up

Why the good ones die young
Why the bad die slow and outlive everyone
And why is all my homies gettin' locked up
'Cause we havin' way too much fun

I'm tellin' you
That I'm one of them homies
Hella ninjas going in and out
Like ninja what the screezy
This a Bay Area soulja on this slap
I'm just reminiscin' of shhh
That I've done in the past
Got ninjas locked up
Got ninjas on probation
Got ninjas gettin' sent away
With a lot more extensions
Did I forget to mention
That I'm just tryin' to survive
So far it's the only way that I know
How to live my life
I'm going to strive and try
To live my life the other way
So I ride and die the right side of the journey

-Justin

From The Beat: You lead us up through a dark tunnel until the very end when there's light at the end of the tunnel! Striving and trying to live "the right side of the journey" is an essential first step, but you've wisely focused on something else you'll need just as much, and that is the "know how" to live another way. Have you thought about various programs that offer training in lots of things? If you are striving, then ask questions. Your teachers might be able to answer some of them. The Beat might be able to answer some. Your counselors might be able to answer some. But the important thing is to ask when you don't know how to get there from here.

When You Look In My Eyes

When you look in my eyes
What do you see?
Do you see the anger and pain
That lives within me?
When you look in my eyes
What do you see?
Do you see the innocent little girl
That I used to be?
When you look into my eyes,
What do you see?
Do you see the secrets I hold
For which there is no key?
When you look in my eyes
What do you see?
Do you see the anger and pain
That lives within me?

-Corrine

From The Beat: When you look into your eyes, what do you see? Do you see the responsible woman you're born to be? Do you see the strength you have of a battered tree? Do you see the intelligence that will let you be free? Take stock of your gifts before they flee...

What Bothers Me?

What bothers me is when people use the "N" word. Not all people, just certain ones. Like I don't know why people go around saying it like it's the thing to say or it doesn't have a definition. They just say it for fun or something like it doesn't matter. And then they have the nerve to say that it's just a word and anybody should be able to say it. But that's not true because the word comes from the past of racism to blacks. So if anyone else would say it that would mean they're being racist because they're bringing up the racism from the past. That's why black people get so mad.

Other people just don't understand the real reason. It bothers me when they just going around saying it like some word made out of nowhere. It bothers me when I tell people they shouldn't be saying that word. They say I can say that word if I want to. It bothers me when they say why are you telling me not to say that word? You say it.

I say it because it's not racist when I say it. But it is racist when another culture says it. Like it doesn't mean anything but it really does. The main reason why it bothers me is because it is racist and they say it like it's a fun word to go around and say. But it's really not if you know the real definition. That's why it bothers me when people say the "n" word.

-Monie

From The Beat: You know, Monie, we agree with the important point you are making that the "N" word is offensive, and that it carries a huge load of racist baggage. But we don't agree with you when you say it's all right for some people to use it but not for other people. We don't care what color people are, that word has a history that includes lynching, centuries of oppression, denial of basic human rights, and even slavery itself! So, just for the record, we are offended **WHENEVER** we hear this word, and we hear it often out of so many mouths. Our advice would be that if this word offends you (as it should), then you should stop using it, because it sounds very strange and indefensible to say, "Well, it's okay when I say it because... but it's not okay when you say it because..."

The Word

When can you say it?

I hate when you say that you don't mean it that way

Why would you say it if it's no race involved

How can you rob the meaning of this word

And think it's okay for it to be said?

When can you say it? Why do you say it?

Does it make you fit in with the crowd?

Or do you like putting others down?

Or do you like the sound?

The words that are coming out of your mouth

Make you sound ignorant

To the ones you are putting down

When can you say it

When can you lay the past down

And show the one you hurt

To never bring up "the word"

-Black Berry

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem, BB. It asks excellent questions about why people (any people) would use a word they know to be offensive to so many. We would love to know the answers to these questions, and not only about "the word" you're thinking of, but about other words which we hear too often. We also love that you won't accept the lame excuse that it doesn't mean what you think it means. Anyone old enough to know how this word has been used to keep people down knows exactly what it means — and what it means is ugly! Thank you for writing beautifully about something that is not beautiful.

Broken Promises

Why did you promise never to leave me,

only to end up hurting and deceiving me?

You were the one who gave me so much hope.

Because of you I felt I could float.

Now through the cuts and bruises on my eyes

I see through the fakeness. I see through the lies.

Why did I love you and open my heart?

Everything ended before it could start.

I trusted you too soon and too easy.

Why did you choose to manipulate me?

-Anonymous

From The Beat: For you, probably the most important line in this tight poem is the one that reads: "I trusted you too soon and too easy." We're sorry you got hurt through this experience, but if you learned a lesson about trust — and the ways males can manipulate females to get what they want — then maybe it was worth it.

Putting Family First

I have to change

I never thought I was going to end up like this

But now I realize how important my family is

I hurt them so much

I'm paying the time by being here

I wish I could be the same when I was small

I used to play with my brother

We used to play in the park in the little games

We all was a family, me and my mom and my step dad

We used to go far away and run all over the park

My mom was the best because she gave us a really fun life

Now I have to let go of the past

and keep going with my family

because family comes first

-Dreamer

From the Beat: Rather than letting go of the past, you have to reclaim it. It's the present that you have to let go of, and go back to that place where you knew you were loved and where life was more innocent, less dangerous, and more fulfilling.

You Make My Heart Beat Fast

Baby, you're what makes my heart beat fast

Kiss you because I miss you

But I never mean to dis you

Check this, you know you lovin' it too

Because you'll always be my boo

I'll be your lady

And you'll be my man

Holdin' hands under tha stars at night

Your arms hold around my waist so tight

It feels so right when you look into my eyes

Sparkles like tha stars in the skies

You'll always be mine

'Cause a love like this is all a girl can wish for

Filled with millions of kisses

The only one to adore

To have and to hold

till our lives grow gray and old

And as your future wife

I'll be by your side

For the rest of your life

-Anna Marie

From The Beat: In this poem you give us some small glimpses of what it was like to be together with your man ("Holdin' hands under tha stars at night..."), and we appreciate that. At the same time, although we recognize the same rush of emotions you describe, we know enough of life and love to know that other emotions are also a part of any relationship, and that all relationships require effort. We hope this one turns out as you see it.

When Your Heart Beats Faster

I think it's one of the best kind of rushes

Drugs can never fake it

Not the right way

When you like someone

Too much it seems like

You have never thought

It's so forbidden

Which makes it even more interesting

You want it more than anything

But you can't have it

Oh...I will get it

-Love

From The Beat: This is very mysterious, and mystery always makes us want to know more! We agree that forbidden romance always adds that much more excitement to a relationship — at least for a while. We'd love to know more about your mysterious stranger, both what makes your love so forbidden and what (who?) it is you plan to get.

Life Is A Game...

Life is a game that we play every day

Don't know 'bout you but my game is the Bay

No pauses and no cheats we is raised off these streets

We don't have an end until we end up six feet deep

The game is over when you're stuck underground

Can't come back to life, 'cause you only had one

I guess you weren't cautious, or didn't know how to play

I must be winnin' 'cause they'll just backstab ya

Go get your hustle on and go get your money

Dawg you'll get respect points but you need to stay cutty

As you can see that this game isn't easy

There's no winning in the game

So we'll end the pain with a bleezy

-Justin

From The Beat: You know, Justin, you're too smart for this kind of casual thinking. If you recognize that "there's no winning in the game," then why go on playing? Did you ever see the movie, "War Games"? It's about a computer simulation of nuclear war that examines every possible scenario, and finally concludes that all scenarios lead to the same end: total annihilation! The only way to win? Don't play!

Never Coming Back

I feel like a caged animal. And now I just want to do my time and get the hell out of here! When I get out I'm never coming back!

-Cordero

From The Beat: Have you been here before? Have you told yourself the same thing before? What are you going to do that's different this time?

Double Digits

Double digits
I'm in to win it
Label me a menace
I'm takin' this shhh to nine innings
To the finish
Testin' the limits
But it ain't no line of scrimmage
That can hold me back
So hold this sac
Put down the bottle of that cognac
And watch me get the weapon back
I'm lettin' my paper stack, dog
'Cause it's big faces on this paper chase
And I'm out to get it all
Labeled born ta ball
'Cause I'm smashin' in the fast lane
Feel the sin and pain
Of the cold game
And it's got you goin' insane

-The Go Getta

From The Beat: When we read a prisoner's rant about "labeled born to ball" or "I'm smashin' in the fast lane," then we have to conclude that you're not looking at the same picture we are. You might label yourself a baller, a chief, a boss, a winner — but the system that controls your every move has different labels for you. Wake up! Get out of here and stop handing your freedom away so easily. With some effort, you really can be something different and better than the county's slave!

What's In My Blood

I don't think drugs and gangs would be followed by me in footsteps

What I have in my blood is to forgive and repent
I would never do anything on purpose just so I can owe debt

I can't wait till I'm free
Because in here all my mind does is play tricks on me

I feel sad and stupid, stereotyped and useless
I owe everyone at home a lot more than
What you used to buy at stores

-Ds

From The Beat: Yes, you do owe those at home who have loved and supported you more than you have given up to now. And you owe yourself more, too.

Release Date

August fifth is the day
The day that I get released
Only a few more days
Meantime my knowledge is increased
Got my GED and I made KP
And I hope my family
Will be happy
I know they expect more
But until then I can't wait
Till I reach my front door

-John

From The Beat: Well John, we're going to miss you in our workshops — but we're not going to miss you so much that we ever want to see you in the halls again! Good luck. You've got what it takes to make it as a free and productive citizen, and we're pulling for you! Thanks for all you have written in The Beat.

I Wanna Get Out

I feel like I wanna get out of here! On the outs sometimes it felt like I was living in hell. For the little thing that I did they just wanna throw me in jail. When I get out I just wanna live my life right.

-Tydis

From The Beat: Does living your life right include giving up those "little things" that send you back

My Shorty

To my Shorty
You are my one and only
Your beautiful eyes
Make the stars shine bright in the sky
And your cute smile
Makes my love for you run wild
You got unconditional love
So I know you're an angel from above

-V-Slick

From The Beat: Besides a cute smile and beautiful eyes, what else can you tell us about your Shorty? Is he respectful? Kind-hearted? Smart? Committed to living in freedom?

Following A Family Pattern

I think the life I lead is in my blood because the stuff I have been doing my mom has done, but at a later age. I'm only 15 and I have been putting my life in danger. I have run away from home numerous times without telling my mom that I am safe. I also have been going out every weekend getting drunk and not caring what happens to me. I don't blame my alcoholism on anyone but myself.

My mom is an alcoholic and so is my dad but I don't blame them because they are not the ones who put the bottle to my mouth and force me to take a sip. I'm the one who picks up the bottle and takes a sip. My dad also sells drugs and he does them from time to time but I'm the one who decided to sniff a few lines here and there. He did not force me to take a sniff. So all in all I don't follow in my parents' footsteps because I'm the one who chooses my path in my life.

Both my mom and dad have tried to convince me that the way I'm going is not the right path but I refused to listen to them and it has ended me up in juvenile hall. I would have to say yes because my decisions have been based on what I have seen in my life and have perceived them to be OK.

-Brown Eyes

From The Beat: Recognizing that your alcoholism is very likely the product of your parents' alcoholism (both by genetic disposition and by imitation of behavior) is not the same as "blaming" them. Alcoholism is a disease, so neither of your parents should be blamed, nor should you be. We don't blame people for diseases, we attempt to cure them. The problem with this particular disease is that it cannot be cured unless the person suffering from it wants to cure it. You cannot make your parents stop being alcoholics because you can't make them want to change; that must come from within. But you can address your own alcoholism, and we urge you to do so in the strongest words we can find. We have no love for what any of the drugs we read about do to those who take them, but we think that alcohol may be the worst of them all (including meth, including crack) because it is so easy to get, so widely pushed everywhere, and so much a part of our culture that it is portrayed as innocent. Please believe us when we say that if you keep drinking, you will end up in the gutter! (We are not describing a physical place, but a mental place, a downward spiral that, with each step down, makes it so much harder to climb back up.) Your claim that you aren't following in your parents' footsteps because you're the one who chooses your path in life is understandable — it's a way of saying you're in control of your own life and life choices — but it's simply not true. We all follow the models we have in front of us, and you are no different from the rest of us. We are not blaming your parents. They had models they were also following before you. We are saying that this is your most serious problem, and that until you deal with it, you will continue to find yourself in situations like this, wishing to be free, but finding yourself more and more enslaved to that bottle.

No More Runnin'

Living life to these beats and dreams
Runnin' through my head like my thoughts were my feet

But I'm not runnin' no more
I'm goin' walk my own pace
I'm also goin' show y'all up
I'm just goin' end my dream chase
That's goin' be a strike
'Cause I ran the wrong way so fast
Now I'm locked up
And got this wooden door in my path
Once I find the key and open the door
I'm goin' live life to the fullest
'Cause life is too short
And I just realized
I could have died so many times
Maybe God wants me here
To teach others about my struggles in life
To put it down on these sheets of paper in rhymes
So if the devil wants me to fail
And is on my ass comin'
I'm just goin' stop and fight him until I win
For me there's no more runnin'

-Justin

From The Beat: This is truly good news, Justin. Can you fill in the details of the life you have in mind when you say, I'm goin' live life to the fullest?

The Person That Loves Me

The person that truly loves me
He's the one that stuck through it all
Broke his heart again an' again
Degraded him an' even brought tears to his eyes
What a shame

'Cause I didn't know w'at I had till I lost it
I know dat you still there
But it's kinda crazy

How you still feel the same way 'bout me
Even though I left you for him
Sometimes I regret it

An' I wish that I could rewind time
An' change all my decisions
I know you still care

Me too, but would it ever be da same
Back to me an' you

We both living our separate lives
I know the way you feel for me will
Never change at least that's what you claim
But is it really true

I feel like I take advantage of you
I only call you when I feel alone
But lately I been dreamin' 'bout you a lot

An' I can't explain it
I ask people w'at that means
But only you can tell me
If I could do it again
Maybe my decision would have been different
An' we would have had five years together
An' still going strong
Everybody always said we were perfect for each other

You thinks that that's true
But honestly I miss you a lot
I'm done playing games

I know that it seems like I am only
Fiending for you like a crack head is in need of some d

Because I am locked up but that's a lie
W'at I felt for you I never stopped feeling
I just kept it bottled up inside

An' now is my time to let you know
You are my best friend an' that's off top
Sorry for all the pain

But in my mind I'll always be your lady
Dedicated to my x-man
Te amo

-Giggles

From The Beat: You know, this isn't really a good use for The Beat. What you've written is a personal letter to a personal friend. It contains no information of value to anyone else. It doesn't explain anything (including what it was you found to love about Travieso or what it was you found to walk away from...), and it's just not a good use of this special resource The Beat provides you. In the future, we most likely will not publish pieces like this (and there are many, many from Hillcrest) that you could just as well put into an envelop, put a stamp on it, and drop in a mailbox.

Lo Que Le Hicieron A Mi Primo

Los que me hicieron sentir incómodos fueron unas personas que mataron a mi primo. También me pusieron dos valasos, pero esas personas tienen que pagar por esto.

El era como mi hermano. Por eso estoy aquí en la cárcel, por quererme vengar. El era mi único hermano. Ese vato era mi mejor amigo. Allí los guacho.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho la pérdida de tu primo. Tienes que darte cuenta que estas son las cosas que se tienen que esperar al andar en los pasos que andas o él andaba. Durante andes en pandillas, muchas otras cosas pueden pasar. Nunca vas a ver algo positivo en esto. Acuerdate que la venganza solo trae más desgracia. Deja que la vida golpee a los culpables. Acuerdate del dicho que dice, "todo lo que sube, tiene que bajar." No permita que te quiten tu vida por una venganza. Sentimos mucho no haber puesto toda tu escritura. Tenía mucho concepto no apropiado.

What They Did To My Cousin

The people that made me feel uncomfortable were some people that killed my cousin. They also put two bullets in me, but those people have to pay for this.

He was like my brother. That's why I am here in jail because I was trying to get revenge. He was my only brother. That dude was my best friend. I'll see y'all later.

-Lil' Crusito B2

From The Beat: We deeply regret the loss of your cousin. You have to realize that these are the kinds of things that one has to come to expect when involved in the kinds of things you are in or he was in. While you are in gangs, many troubling things could happen. You are never going to see something positive come from this. Keep in mind that revenge only brings more disgrace. You should simply allow life to get those who are to blame. Keep in mind the saying that goes: "Everything that goes up, must come down." Don't let someone take your life because of an act of revenge. We regret not having printed your entire piece. It contained a lot of inappropriate content.

Mi Sueño Es . . .

Voy volando por la gran ciudad, viendo miles de gentes pasar. A veces veo a los niños que en la esquina están pidiendo para un taco, pidiendo para un pedazo de pan. A veces les dan algo, pero la mayoría no dan nada. Así es el vacío que se siente cuando tú no estás, más profundo que el mar, más inmenso que la eternidad, más oscura que la media noche, así es el vacío que se siente cuando tú no estás.

From The Beat: Si llegas al extremo de comparar el dolor que se siente ver a los niños en la esquina pidiendo por comida a la falta que te hace tu novia, eso quiere decir que debes de estar sufriendo mucho. ¿Has buscado la manera como ayudarles a evitar sentir este sentimiento?

My Dream Is . . .

I'm flying through the big city, seeing thousands of people pass by. Sometimes I see the kids on the corner and they are begging for a taco, begging for a piece of bread. Sometimes people give them something, but the majority of people don't give them anything. That is how the emptiness feels when you are not here, deeper than the sea, more immense than eternity, darker than midnight. That is how the emptiness feels when you are not here.

-Anonymous B4

From The Beat: If you reached the extreme of comparing the pain that one feels to see kids on the corner begging for food to how you feel not having your girlfriend, that must mean you are suffering a lot. Have you sought a way to help you avoid feeling this feeling?

Lo Extraño

¿Que onda Beat? Pues ahorita aquí estoy aburrido en mi cuarto y desearía estar en mi canton con mis seres queridos. Yo no sé porque pero cuando no estoy en el bote nomás me la paso en la calle y ni siquiera pienso en mi familia, ni en mi canto, pero cuando me tuercen, lo chistoso es que empiezo a extrañar las cosas y a las personas.

Cuando estaba en la calle ni siquiera pensaba en ellas. Al estar aquí me ha hecho cambiar mucho y cuando salga todo va a ser diferente.

Espero salir pronto porque extraño a mi familia y a mi jaina aunque me escriba mucho. Quisiera verla en persona y no en foto.

From The Beat: Hay muchos de nosotros quienes no sabemos apreciar las cosas hasta que las perdemos o las vemos perdidas. No deje que esto te pase a ti. Haz lo posible para estar con las personas que te quieren y quieres. Este lugar no es para ti ni para nadie.

I Miss Him

What's up, Beat? Well, right now I'm here, bored in my room, wishing I could be at my house with loved ones. I don't know why, but when I am not in jail, I just spend my time out on the streets and I don't even think about my family, not even when I am at home, but when they lock me up, the funny thing is I start to miss the things I have at home and the people.

When I was out on the streets, I didn't even think once about these things. By me being in here, it has made me change a lot, and when I get out, everything is going to be different.

I hope to get out soon because I miss my family and my girlfriend, even though she writes to me a lot. I would love to see her in person and not on a photo.

-D 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are many of us who do not know how to appreciate the things we have until we lose them or we see that we have lost them. Don't let this happen to you. Do what's possible so you can be with the people who love you and who you love. This place is not for you, nor is it for anybody else.

No Me Doy Por Vencido

Yo creo que en alguna cosa no puedo darme por vencido. ¿Si te le hicieran algo a un hermano como que te lo mataron, te darías por vencido? Creo que yo no puedo quedarme vencido. A mí me mataron a un hermano y a mí me pegaron un tiro. Yo sé quienes lo hicieron.

El mejor sueño que tube fue cuando estuve soñando con mi hijo y mi novia. No quise despertarme nunca. En ese sueño soñaba que estaba jugando con mi hijo y que luego mi hijo me preguntaba quien era yo, y yo le decía que era su padre. Un saludo a todos los Hondureños.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho lo que paso con tu hermano. ¿Te ha ayudado en algo la muerte de él y el disparo que te dieron para reflexionar en las cosas que estas haciendo mal? Si estas pensando en vengarte, deberías de quitarte ese pensamiento de encima. Al lastimar a otro, no vas a revivir a tu hermano mas que ocasionarte más problemas hasta poner tu vida en peligro. En la otra mano, ese sueño estuvo bonito. No te falta mucho para realizar este sueño. ¿Una vez que tengas este sueño por cuanto tiempo lo tendras?

I Am Not Conceding Defeat

I believe that in some things, I cannot concede defeat. If they did something to your brother like killing him, would you concede defeat? I believe that I cannot stay defeated. One of my brothers was murdered and whoever did it hit me once. I know the people who did it.

The best dream that I had was when I was dreaming about my son and my girlfriend. I never wanted to wake up from this dream. In that dream, I dreamt that I was playing with my son and then my son asked me who I was, and I told him I was his father. Greetings to all Hondureans.

-Lil' Crusito B2

From The Beat: We deeply regret what happened to your brother. Has his death or the bullet wound they gave you helped you out in any way to reflect on the things that you are doing bad? If you are planning on getting revenge, you should erase that thought from your head. By hurting another person, you're not going to revive your brother, but instead bring more problems to yourself and even put your life in danger. On the other hand, that dream was beautiful. You only have a little bit more time to do in order to realize this dream. Once you have this dream, for how long will you have it?

Quiero Quedarme Con Dios

Quisiera nunca haber venido aquí. Lo único que quisiera en verdad es que cuando muera quedarme con mi Dios. Yo no me quiero quedar en la tierra junto a las malas personas. Sé que he sido una persona mala, sé que la mayoría dirían lo peor. La verdad es que ya no me importa lo que ellos digan o hagan con tal que mi Dios me perdone. Sabiendo esto me conforma porque sé que no me voy a quedar con ellos sino que con mi Dios que ha perdonado todo mis pecados.

From The Beat: Según la Biblia, para ganarse el reino de Dios, se necesita seguir las leyes de Dios. ¿Crees que las estas cumpliendo? Estamos seguros que Dios te perdonara siempre y cuando lo pidas con el corazón. Sigue luchando y haz lo que sea indicado para siempre estar a lado de Dios. Suerte!

I Want To Stay With God

I wish I never came to this place. Honestly, the only thing that I would like is that when I die, to stay with my God. I don't want to stay here on Earth next to bad people. I know that I've been a bad person and I know the majority of people would say the worst. The truth is, I no longer care what those people say or do, as long as my God forgives me. Knowing this satisfies me because I know that I am not to stay with them, but rather with my God who has forgiven all my sins.

-Anonymous, Marin

From The Beat: The Bible says, in order to gain the kingdom of God, you have to follow the laws of God. Do you believe you are following them? We're sure that your God will always forgive you when you ask Him to do so with sincerity. Continue fighting and do what's written so you can always be by your God's side. Good luck!

The Lake of Fire, When I Talk to Myself

When I'm talking to my inner self, I'm in the lake of fire. I feel that this life I live is life in the lake! I start off by sayin', "What's up, Sax! What is you goin' to do? How we goin' to do?"

"Hurt! Destroy!" are the only thoughts that come into my head! I set up everybody who put dirt on my name: "Get rid of everybody that comes in the way of what you want!"

When I talk to myself, I come up with the life of a hood star, with money flowing, coming from every direction — and having everything I want, with drugs and guns everywhere! In a mansion on top of the hill, in power and control of hundreds of patnas!

But then it comes to me that I'd have to get rid of some people to live like that, "... without having haters trying to knock me off! Take care of a couple of problems ..." to make sure I can't fall from the house on the hill with all my pills.

When I talk to myself, I get frustrated because I want to live my life without having to kill. But some people just won't stop until they can't move any further. I don't like having the feeling and the mind-frame that I have to take care of these "problems"! I wish they'd just go away! But I know they won't.

When I start talking to myself, I realize that I'm the only person that contributes to my wealth, and only I care to protect my health. That's why, when I come back, I ain't takin' no losses. Free Lucifer.

-Sax

From The Beat: As the story goes, Lucifer will be freed for one final battle, at which he meets his final defeat, ushering in a thousand years of peace! At least that's one traditional interpretation of the story, but in every version: Lucifer meets his final defeat. If life is like a lake of fire, you need to let those flames burn away these hellish visions of victory through murder and violence. The war is in your own head and heart, and that's where Lucifer, already free (who do you think shouts, "Kill! Kill!"), must meet his final defeat — in you — for you to be free from this torment. On the road of violence, there is no end to violence. When you're ready to change your path, you need no longer fear an enemy's wrath. Nobody cares about a square. And if you look up in the hills — that's who lives there. The only thing you can't afford to lose is your humanity, 'cause therein lies your sanity (and nothing less than your freedom and future success).

Soul Mate

What it do Beat and Beat readers. It's the prince, Lil' Solid, lettin you'll know what's on my mind, so here it go:

What it take for a solid ninja like me to keep a smile. One is my brothas, cause they always watchin ova and out for me, cause nowadays ninja's ain't got nobody to watch out for 'em, cause ninjas hate on each other too much, for anybody to come up.

But what really keep me smiling though any and er'thang is my baby girl Lil' Ta. She been with the prince thru it all and she still love yo boy, getting it like I was right next to her. She done did a lot of shhh for me, from when somebody telling her he was gon' shot me, to her getting into a fight with her granny over me bein in the room without moms.

So, I got my soul mate for life. 'Cause she solid like that just what I need in my life and she part of the fam and I respect and love the hell out of her, for the shhh she do and if I had to pick over again, baby boo, I would still pick you. No, I'm not lying 'cause all I do is stay true, 'cause it's me and you against the world. Can't wait to get home to see and be with you.

She so solid, she movin to Fairfield with me, my brothas and sista. To be continued...

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Lil' Solid, sounds like you got yourself a great girl. Are you down for her the way she is down for you? The best kind of relationship is one where both partners feel that they can trust each other. Treat her the way you want to be treated and your relationship will continue to grow. Be good Lil' Solid, you got a good girl who rather see you free handling business legitly, rather than living the incarcerated life.

My Baby

I been here for a while and always been true
You know how I feel, so I'm missin' you
You know you a star I'm feelin' so good
Would you be my entourage

I love you baby, so please stay true
'Cause Brittany baby, I love you.

-Deandre

From The Beat: Awe... a love poem. But you too need to stay true to yourself and get yo' self out of juvenile and back home handling business!

Non-Stop Life

what is life — life is without, living a life

see life for me is what you got in the hall nothing else be 'bout your problem, i'm living my life head on, no stopping for no break, this is how you get money, non-stop, eventually you go' have some dough, buy you a car, some rims, and some apartment somewhere, this is life for me, this how i eat feed my seeds and get more money, but life is a b-- then you die and ain't nothing else but your legacy

-Young Quez

From The Beat: If you were talking about a legal job, what you say about making money might be true. But if you're talking about that street hustle, out on the grind hustling D or whatever, then there's no such thing as non-stop — because you will get caught up, now and again, like you are right now in this max unit, and your money stops. If you really want to be about money that will feed your "seeds" — then you need to get that GED and a j-o-b and stay free! Your kids will want see their daddy, not just his sometime 'fetti.

So Crazy

Everything around me in this juvenile hall is just so crazy! No one can say nothing good to theirself or to no one!

Now for me, I try to be kicked-back, but it's hard when people start to put on an act. That kind of thing just makes me mad, even when they are not talking to me. Like when I see some people in this maximum security unit, some of them are really not going to make it. So I tell you — do something with yo' life! Because them boys in prison or CYA get with you, it's going to be hard, and put on an act there it will get you killed.

So just keep it real. Comes a time when there ain't no talkin'. Just know that mo' love or no love. So make something out of yourself more than coming into places like this.

-Choyce

From The Beat: It is important for those who are going on to CYA and prison to prepare themselves mentally. But when you start that "hard" process, that prison mentality, in the face of freedom, you usually end up condemning yourself to time at the Y or prison, or you could even say, to use your words, "it will get you killed." Meanwhile, if some fool wants to bump his gums, it says more about him than it does whoever he's talking to — and let it go at that. Don't give him any more space in your head than that.

My Money

What's up Beat this is Chris. But I choose money over females 'cause a female can't do nothing for me. My money comes first in my life and it always will.

I love this female named Lyshawn, but I still got a lot of love for them green guys. You know my money. She knows I love her but when I got them chizzaz (money) in my hand it feels good. But my Boo knows I love her.

Now I would like to address the issue of my cousin getting shot at the game. If I was at the game I woulda kept it solid for ya lil' bro. But I gotta go, so bye Beat, I'ma be gone when y'all get this, but y'all stay up. Love you Lyshawn.

-Chris

From The Beat: It sounds like you're conflicted... on the one hand you say that money comes first. But then what do you talk about? You talk about loving your girl, and missing your cousin. Which is more important to you, people or money? To tell the truth we believe that what matters to you most is people, because we know how much heart you have.

Waitin' For My Release

What it do! Just another day with The Beat Within. To all inside and out, keep yo' chin up, stand tall through it all. Allow me to introduce myself: This is Lil' Mark from Hayward. What's up to all.

Now to biz — what's up wit' it? What's been good? Well, as for me, I been coo', just postin' up in this weak lil' max unit, watchin' days pass by and waitin' for my release day next month. It's gonna be hella coo'! I'm gonna kick it wit' the fam' — smoke purp' and drink some Henney and then get wit' my lady! Feel me?

Then I am gon' go and find a job the next day and make that chedda mayne! But I'm a close this off by sending my love and. But I'm out. Alrato.

-Lil' Krazy

From The Beat: Man, we're glad you added those words about looking for a job the next day. Careful though, 'cause sometimes celebrating your freedom too hard will land you back behind bars before you back to your senses. Make sure your party doesn't last a week or whatever, 'cause you really can't count on finding a job in a day. Looking for a job is a full-time job, till something comes through. We know you can handle freedom if you stay patient and do it the right way. 'Cause if you go back to hitting licks, you'll be locked down again quick or slow, either way, it's nowhere you really want to go. Props on getting this second chance!

Fake Ninjas

Here in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, we've got the fakest ninjas that swear they hard, swear they out there putting points on the board for the 'hood, but they really out there telling on the 'hood.

They always talking about they got this and they got that, when they ain't got a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out! Real recognize real.

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: It's a sad cycle. The fake talk about how hard they are, and just make it harder to face the challenge of getting up out of the life that brought them here. Meanwhile, the hard ones, hearing all the wannabe talk, get caught up in the stubborn pride that keeps them from change, 'cause "real recognize real." So the system keeps the halls, jails and prisons filled.

Life In a Box

If I had a metal box, a time capsule, I'd put hella stuff in it. I would put stuff that showed and told stuff I did in my lifetime. It would be about how I done whooped people, held hella pistols and busted ninjas, smoked hella purple, drank hella Henney, and all the beezies I done been with, and how many times I done did dirt, and how many licks I pulled. But I don't know what else to say, but I'm a get at you later. Oh yeah. Alrato.

-Lil' Krazy

From The Beat: Why you gotta be so proud of all the bull you pulled in your life? That attitude is gonna make that life style pull you back like a fly to shhh. Haven't you had enough hurt? Enough time incarcerated? We know you plan to get a legal job, but if your heart stays in the past with house licks, pistols and doing dirt — well, back when freedom was just a hope and prayer, you were thinking more clearly than you are now. For crying out loud!

Piece of the Week

why can't i get piece of the week
is it because my talk is cheap
wait every week to write the beat
and i still can't get piece of the week
is it because my name is sunny d
or is it because the beat is for free
man i'm lost could you tell me
and i know i don't pay no money
so just please tell me why
am i not piece of the week
is it because they're using me
i don't know, i'm through with the beat
now is this a piece of the week

-Sunny D

From The Beat: Using your for what? We just ask for the best that you've got. Form and content, thought and style, everything counts — can you go that extra mile? You are definitely one of our better writers and you improve every week, but now you're hating on us and claiming you're "through with the beat". And here we are, even printing this hater piece! We put in work for you each and every week.

In My Time Capsule

Well, my time capsule will express about the negative part of my life and the good things. But one thing I would say, is positive things to encourage future-born kids, because the government wanna take money from our schools to make jails! So that's something I'll talk about, because there are new laws.

-Alan

From The Beat: So tell us what things you'd put in to represent the negative and the good things in your life. But now, we applaud your desire to share positive things with kids in the future — and the truth, even if it's negative, like the state building more prisons when we need to spend money on schools for our youth.

My Darkest Fear Of The Night

My tears sweat hard and harder everyday.
I think about fear of time past
In the future nighttime is my thing to do!
Is grow and glow like a bright light?
I'm a night, fighting dark is my shadow.
That's my fear — can you see my dark side night?

My heart is dark not light.
The red moon of the devil comes at night.
The crows fly to a sight.

I think something's walking in the night;
It past me but every time the light shut off
A night of my darkest fear comes.

-Brandon

From The Beat: So we like where this piece was headed, although we are a little confused. There is some great imagery in this poem ("The red moon of the devil comes at night") that really makes the words come alive in the reader's mind. However sometimes we can get so caught up in trying to conjure up different ideas and emotions, our writing loses focus and we just end up confusing the reader. You have a way with words so next time focus on the message more. Everything else will fall into place. If you need help reading your piece before turning it in ask us!

What is Life?

Life to me is getting money, high and the other shhh, you know that come wit' life. The good and the bad and most of all being real to yo'self and the game. You feel me, but on the real, life is what you make, it know that.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: A logic question for you, Baby Lou. Is it possible to stay true to yourself and to the game at the same time? You've lost enough people and enough time to know the terrible cost of the game, how can that be true to you?

One Hell Of A Hug

Do you understand why I hug you?
I hug you because I love you.

I hug you to touch you —
My hug is to embrace you.
I'm your man so I turn to face you.
My hug is for protection.

Look at us — my hug's the image of perfection.
It's more than just connection, it's satisfaction.
Baby, give me a hug and I'll make it everlasting.

-S

From The Beat: Boy that is one hell of a hug. Job well done Sem Boy — this piece has heart and originality for days. You manage to take something pretty simple and make it heart-felt and meaningful. It's always important to let the people who mean the most to you know how you feel. Hugs are pretty great so we are glad you found someone special to hug.

I Like to Succeed

i like to do good deeds to stay on my feet
i like to help the homeless so they can eat
i like to treat people with respect
i like to buy my family jewelry to go around their neck
i like to go to school to get educated
i like to think a great thing is to have a lot of relations
i like to go places and have fun
i like to be out at night to play with guns
i like to meet girls so we can do new things
i like to meet girls to get in their jeans
my name is hard and i like to do right
my name is nard and i'm going to succeed in life

-Nard

From The Beat: Playing with guns may seem like fun, but it's gonna make all your plans for success come undone. On the real, a gun is nothing to play with, so if you really want to succeed in life then make sure you stay with — respect, education, doing right. And if you ever want to find the right girl, look into her mind and heart to feel her inner world; jump into the wrong jeans and you'll be a father in your teens, with a stranger for its mama instead of the girl of your dreams.

Talking

Well, when I talk, I'll be talking about normal things, like school, hanging out. But when you in jail and locked up, you basically talk to yourself — because when we interact with each other, we don't talk about things when we locked up. So it's a difference. But that's what I got.

-Alan

From The Beat: Thank you for reminding us of what we know, that no one really talks about normal things when they're locked up. No one wants to let anyone else in on his/her (emotional) life.

Why?

If I was to have a conversation with myself I would have to have a long talk about every situation in my life like why I hit that lick?

Why did I have that thang?

Why didn't I just go to school?

Why I had to do what I did?

Why didn't I just say, "Naw."

Why did I go in raw? It's all crazy now — I might have a new born baby.

Why did I run? I wasn't missing nothing in the town.

It ain't even fun no more. Now I'm behind another closed door, following they rules and it aint solid. That stuff ain't coo' now. I wish I could take it back, but now it is like crack, once you go you gone come back

-Darryl

From The Beat: You are not alone. There is not a single person on this earth that doesn't look back at a particular situation(s) and say to themselves, "What the hell was I thinking?" or "How could I be so careless?" Do you want to know why — because we didn't know any better. Or we did but we didn't care. Either way an important lesson has been passed on through our actions, knowledge that make us better, stronger, happier people. This piece shows that you are growing. You are asking the right questions and are starting to realize that your actions have consequences. Hang on — you are getting there. Just don't be discouraged — things, at some point, will get easier.

Freedom In the Air

What up, Beat? This that ninja, Lil' Bee — you know, the one who's a bad listener. Man, I'm finally up here at Camp, and this program is hella bootsy! I be feeling like hittin' that good-and-bad gate. I see freedom every time I look at the gate. Well, I was go' hit the gate wit' my patna, Frog, but I didn't want to take the risk.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: You were right not to run. It's more than a risk, it's a sure thing! You will get caught up again, and maybe with a more serious charge. Even without a more serious charge, if you keep running, they send someplace you can't run from, like CYA. Just do this program, and when you go free, go free to stay!

Free Me

What's up Beat? This is yo' boy Twon, still behind doors. But I'm getting out this week. I'm going to do my program this time because if I run I'm going to CYA, or at least that's what the judge told me. That's all you got.

-Lil' Twon

From The Beat: You have a real opportunity facing you and it sounds like you know exactly what you have to do. The choices are really simple if you think about it: stay in a place where you might learn something to make your life better or go back to a place where freedom is a dream.

Freedom

Well, what's up wit' it? This Tui Tui, just saying what it do! Well, I'm writing about freedom and how it affect people in different ways. I think if you give someone too much freedom, they don't know what to do. They'll probably go back on doing the same thing to get back in this situation.

Of course no one like being locked up. It's just the shhh we do. If you was locked up, you would want to be out. But if you go to a group home or Camp, that's a little freedom. But when you run, it's just like running from your problems — but people don't care about consequences. Some people want to go to YA. That's why we don't listen or obey. But what can I say? Some people like it.

If was to run, well, I'll think about consequences, but I won't trip. I know where I'm'a go if I do run! But like I said, it's a rough life that we live out here in the streets.

-Tui Tui

From The Beat: It really comes down to what you want to do with your life, and we really mean, what you want to do! Thinking about consequences can help you put yourself in check when you're about to act a foo' unless that's what you really want to do. If you want to act a foo', thinking about consequences won't stop you — no matter how serious (and they do get serious!). If you can ever make up your mind that you want to stop playing hide-and-seek, catch-me-if-you-can, with the law and make your money so that you can walk right past the police without a care (not that fake walk you put on to fool them but on the real); if you ever make up your mind you don't ever want to be locked up again and you'll do whatever it takes to insure your freedom; if you're strong enough not to have be "a gangsta" but free man — that's when you'll stop running. That's when you'll stay free (and stay to finish whatever program it takes to have you walk free).

Just a Beautiful Dream

I had a dream that I was at home lying on my bed and Halle Berry came and sat next to my right side and I looked to my left and seen Alicia Keyes — and then my roommate woke me up and I was stressin'.

-Chopper

From The Beat: So you were dreaming of heaven and then landed — with a thud — in the real world and a dark cell, yikes!!! All the more reason to get out of the hall!

East Bay View

What's up, Beat! This Lil' Marquitos comin' at you! I'd like to say what's up to my fam in maximum security. Stay solid and keep your chin up before it hits your chest. Now for my topic, "East Bay View" —

Up here at Camp, it's coo' so far, though there's a lot to learn. I'm gonna strive for my GED and pimp this program, so when all my loved ones get out the system, they got something good to work with. Tu sabes! I love my family as much as they want to se a real Chicano from the 'hood make it.

You know, things gotta happen for the better not the worse. As long as we hold onto what we stand for, ain't nothin' gonna break that bone. So to my family in the Hall, Santa Rita, wherever the rest of us are incarcerated, stay up.

-Lil' Marquitos

From The Beat: The best thing you can do for your 'hood is get that GED and then get a legal job to bring home that steady paycheck. The youngsters need someone to look up to, someone who can show them that there are better ways to make money than doing those things that will get you locked up.

Talking To My Inner Self

If I was to talk to my inner self, I would ask questions to find out why I'm here locked up in an institution not knowing why. Sometimes I sit in my room and wonder what in the hell am I doing here. Only if I had time to search.

-Hakeem

From The Beat: When you're locked up, time is all you have, so use it to answer all these questions in your head and heart. Share with The Beat what you learn!

Thoughts on Life

Life is what you live and become, because life is very important. Because you can do anything you want to do, and you can be anybody you want to be in life.

It don't matter what people think about you, because they ain't living your life, so if people talk down on you, just keep walking and keep your head up, because you are your own person.

So that's what life means to me, because I know what life means, because I been though a lot of stuff. I hope that I get out of here, because I want to live a good and happy life with my girl and her family, because they treat me good. How am I going to achieve in life is to get a job and go to college. And then after college I will live with my family, and live to an old age.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: What do you think it is that keeps people from finding their own way in life? How do they get pushed off (or jump off) that path that they are trying to walk?

In My Room

I don't ever talk to myself when I'm in my room. I just don't get down like that. That ain't me. Because when I'm in my room I think about my mom, the girl and my dad.

RIP to my dad. I didn't forget about you sis, RIP Jamie, my baby sister. One love to all. One love to my cousin, Jt. One love.

-G-Money

From The Beat: You've got lots to think about, for sure. Thanks for sharing all your love for your people with our pages.

I Miss

I miss my life I had on the outs. I miss my mom because I can't see her every day like I used to. I miss my girlfriend because I miss holding her in my arms, kissing her, and whispering in her ear. I miss eating what I want to eat when I can eat it. I miss wakin' up when I want to wake up and layin' in my own bed. My life got messed up. I miss my life on the outside of Juvenile Hall and I wish I could turn back the hands of time.

-New Owllins Boy!

From The Beat: Well, you can't do anything about the past, but the future is in your hands. What would it take for you to make sure nothing like this every spoiled your future. Give us, say 6 steps.

What If

what if i was a different race
would people look at me
different because of the color
of my face

what if you could see
some of the things
i went through
it was hard in my hood dude
what if people could
stop looking at you because
of the color of your skin
what if you could put
yourself in my shoes
do some of the things i did
would you have ended up
in this place like i did

-Young D

From The Beat: When we look around the rooms in various juvenile halls, the colors change, though we still see predominantly black or brown faces. We don't doubt but that racial profiling continues to prejudice law enforcement, nor do we doubt that it was hard growing up in your 'hood. But the question we have to ask you is whether you're looking for an excuse or a solution for your situation. We suggest you quit the grind and set your mind on what it will take for you to stay free. You have accept reality before you can change it, and we're all for change.

I Ask Many Questions

when i talk to my inner self
i ask many questions like
what we are going to do
when we get out
i can't really talk about
when i get out though
because i don't know
what i'm going to do
people might mistake me
for a gang member but i'm not
i just try to do good
like a square

-Karlitos

From The Beat: Do good like a square and you won't have to come back in here. 'Cause it's not what you look like but what you do that defines in the long run what happens to you. On the other hand, why look like a G, if that's not what you want to be?

RIP Cell

I want to change, but it's hard 'cause I'm stuck in the game. After I lost my big bra Cell, life has been down hill. When Cell died he took a part of me that will never get back. I just hope I see my bra on the other side of them railroads, and he keeps eyes on his loved ones, and knows that people really miss him down here. I love you Cell, we'll see you soon.

June 19th, 1987 to February 16th 2006.

-Lil' Booda

From The Beat: We say this each week, but we'll say it again: The best way to honor Cell's life is to put your grief and pain to work. Get out of the game and live a life in the sun, - for him and all your memories of him. Peace. (You are not stuck unless you CHOOSE to be stuck.) Find inspiration in the darkness, look at Beat writer Naudie Bo he too is feeling Cell's lost, and from what we gather he is very determine to live right!

Lil-Pug

Yeah, this Lil-Pug trying to get out, thinkin' about my fallen soldiers, Jerm, Rob, Deshaw, Ball Player, Emmitt, Tommesha, Rame, Tacy, and everybody else. RIP.

Yeah back to what I was saying, I'm missing all y'all. I hope that y'all in a very better place. I'm on my way to a group home in for 6-9 months but it's good. I get dough all day everyday. I'm going to get back to y'all beat next time.

-Lil' Pug

From The Beat: You've lost a lot of friends, Lil' Pug! Tell us what's going on out there, and how this affects you inside. All this on one or no one talk isn't doing you any favors. Wake up and smell the positive. Turn your love for your fallen soldiers into some positive action for yourself.

RIP Big Doodie

RIP Big Doodie, who was my best friend and everyday he was on the block. He would talk to me and my brothers about life and when I got in the hall, he died. Now I'm in here staring at these walls cryin' and thinking about my big homie. I know you're looking down on me saying everything's okay.

-Young Tuttle

From The Beat: Big Doodie is probably looking down on you saying, "Be safe Young Tuttle, do whatever you can to save yourself from a young death like mine. Please take care of my homies by getting them off the block." Everything's not ok as long as young men are dying on the streets, and he knows it.

Turf

What is it? A lizard or a blizzard my ninja? It's yo' boy, Lil' JB!

Man I'm just in here reflectin' on the turf, feel me. I miss the turf so much. I miss being out there with my boys. I miss being on, like shhh spittin' at all the lil' turf bops. I miss my cousin Dada, Book, Dee Dee, all my ninjas Corn, Cool, Dirt, and Richie Boi miss being on hell pills and posting on the block like a light pole. I love talking to y'all about the turf but time for me to cut.

-Lil' JB

From The Beat: No doubt you miss your life on the outs, but if you can make the connection between what you were used to out there, and why you are sitting in the hall - well, then you might be able to make some choices that keep you from coming back. Be safe out there.

What's Life?

Life to me is when I got everything I want I'm in my life like my baby girl who's gonna be there for me through it all, then you got your mom's, pop's, brothas, sistas, because in the real life streets that's what you got out here because all these cats that call you lil' bra, you really not. Because if it was like that people don't go bad on family because we quiet and we stay to ourselves.

RIP Chris. I love you and miss you big brotha. We'll miss you Lil' Jay.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: You've got lots of wisdom to share. Tell us more about the truth and lies on the streets, and what it means to live.

Bury Everything In My Time Capsule

I would bury my PS2, my favorite shoes - Jordans. I would bury my girlfriend's picture, all my Lil' Wayne mix tapes, all my DVD movies, all my clothes, all my pictures of me and my cousins and my friends, my family and friend's obituaries, my rest in peace shirts and hoody and all my baby pictures.

-Antwoine

From The Beat: Wow, Antwoine, is there anything you wouldn't want to bury - for any reason?

Can I Change Mi Vida?

The life I live...it's like one day I was a kid and another teenager, and now it's like I'm growing up real quick. Livin' this gangster life I live. If I had a chance to change I would, but for now I'm gonna keep it solid. I'm going to a group home, but you know I'm a beast it out til December. I just can't wait to get out the Hall.

-Looney

From The Beat: But you do get a chance to change, every single day. Every day you have it in your power to make a decision that will take you away from jail and counselors and probation and court. Yet you don't. What is it that's so valuable to you that it would be worth your freedom?

My Favorite Things To Do

These are some of my favorite things to do. I like to play basketball - I got a really good shot. It releases a lot of stress. I guess after I'm done playing all day I feel relaxed. It just eases my mind.

I like to be with women a lot. I don't need to explain why about that. I like women of all different races. I like to hang out with friends on a day-to-day base. I like to laugh and tell jokes. I also like to make money; that's very important 'cause I can't be broke all day. Sometimes I also like to do certain things by myself.

-By X

From The Beat: Well thank you for sharing with us X. It's important to find healthy ways in which to relieve stress and make life enjoyable, like playing sports or hanging out with good friends. Laughter and happiness truly are some of the strongest medicine around. You have a lifetime to spend with ladies so don't rush things on that front.

Back Home With My Girl

I was having this dream that I was back at home with my girl for like the first time since the day I left her. The dream was about us being back together and spending every day together, like a relationship is supposed to be when you are in love.

It was only me and her in the dream, I have had this dream a couple of times. I wish that it was real. I hope this dream does come true, because I really miss my girl.

That's all I dream about!

-Albert

From The Beat: Have you told your girl this? Better yet, have you made a plan for how you can stick by her when you get out - and never find yourself in a situation where you let the system mess with you again?

Out on EM

What's up with you Beat? This your homie, Lil' Boxer. Well I got some good news. I just got back from court yesterday and they gave me an EM release, until my next court date. Then I might go to camp for five months or to a group home but I ain't trippin' at least I get out for a month.

Well I was in here I had an alright time, because I was with coo' ass staff. I was also in there with some solid homies, that watched over me and helped me out while I was here. Oh, and I'd like to tell them, keep their heads up and good lookin' out.

Hope to see you on the outs.

-Lil' Boxer

From The Beat: Good luck on that EM - or rather, since it's not about luck, we wish you good thoughts instead, the kinds of thoughts that keep you away from trouble. When you get tempted, try and imagine the voices of your favorite staff and what they would say, maybe that will help.

My Inner Self Is Messed Up

i think that my inner self is so messed up
that i'll go crazy if i let it out
but now that i'm in here, it helps me
my inner self is that i'm a stay to myself all the time

if you try to get in you will fail
i only tell my inner self to people i love
people i want to be with for the rest of my life
see i love to smoke but i'm not going to smoke for the rest of my life
my life is lovely and i love everybody until they hate on me

-John Doe the Gigolo

From The Beat: You're not going to smoke because it lets your inner self out, and you get into crazy trouble? Well, yeah, it's a good idea not to use any drug that makes you feel uninhibited when you fear your inner desires and impulses. As you live a lovely and loving life, day by day, though, perhaps you'll learn that your inner self is less fearsome than confused, and that your heart though bruised will heal itself through what you choose.

What's Love?

Love to me is when you show strong feelings to someone, and have a strong compassionate feeling for that person. Some people just say they love someone just to make that person feel good or you know what, ya heard me! When I tell my girl I love her I really mean it because my love for her is unconditional and very strong towards her, when the words come out my mouth it's from the heart.

That's what love is about for you cats that don't know what it means. Holla back atcha boy, you heard me.

-New Owlins Boy!

From The Beat: The words are from the heart, but now what about the actions? What do you DO to show this girl you love her? Seems the first thing you need to do is insure that you can be with her, that is by not getting locked up and separated.

Talking to my Inner Self

See you know how it is on the block,
doing hella shhh so you know you got to talk to yourself
about how you going to do this, and that's how it is on the block.

Now a ninja locked up
so I got to talk to myself and see how everybody's moving and what they doing.
So I tell myself that this ninja real and this ninja's fake

and I talk to myself about how will my girl feel if I do this, or I do that.

But after all that I tell myself "forget all of this, you know the rest."

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: Man, you know what we're going to say. This conversation you have with yourself is a poem in the making, and we think you should write it down as a Beat piece!

Kudah, I Ask Myself, Why ...

What is it, Beat? Things I say to myself or ask myself? I ask myself, "Kudah, why do you do what you do?" And I always get back, "It's how you was raised - around drug dealers, pimps and hustlers."

And I say, "Kudah, you got to fix the chain and change the 'hood." Deep down inside, I want to change - but I guess I ain't ready.

-Kudah

From The Beat: You may never feel one hundred per cent ready to change. So fake it till you make it. Start thinking and acting differently; then, day by day, it will feel a little less strange, and will seem a little more possible for you to escape the fate you were born into but deep down inside are ready to outgrow.

This Life We Livin'

What's good, Beat? This Chuckie, writing from Camp. Well, before i get started, I would like to extend my utmost love and respect to all doing their time.

I'm good, just thinking about this life we're livin'. It's crazy! Not too long ago, one of my homeboys got shot. Thank God he's alive! But like we all know, once you in it, you knew what the consequences were gonna be; so just get ready 'cause we still got a long road to walk through. So tie your shoes, pull up those dickies and get ready for the future. I'm out with love and respect.

-Chuckie

From The Beat: That's straight bull to tell the people you love that when they get shot and maybe killed, that they knew the consequences when they got in. You have been so brainwashed you're not even thinking any longer, just spouting the phrases you've been taught to say. Meanwhile more homies getting shot and going to jail everyday. What would happen if you stopped to think? Not just you, but so many other young men just like you. You're walking a road that leads only to jails, hospitals and death.

Ain't Stressin'

I been here for dumb ass long. Me and my ninja. But I ain't even stressin', because I know I'll get out. They're really tryna find something on me, but they can't do nothin' to a G. I'ma get out sooner or later. So to all my ninjas stay up.

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: We know that you'll get out one day. You'll beat this case. But when you get out, then what? Back to the streets? Back to the drama that took your freedom this last time? You were good at school, good at sports, you know you have it in you to make a whole new life for yourself. But the whole street pose will have to go. Are you ready to give it up?

Fake and Real

Man I'm hella mad. Today is my brother's birthday, man this shhh ain't right. He's locked up for his and I'm going to be locked up for mines. But that ain't it, it's the fake ninjas in here saying they solid, but I just look at them, cause I can tell a real ninja from a fake ninja.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: You write about that a lot, about telling the real from the fake. But we want to know what you mean, what does integrity mean to you, Baby Lou?

The Starmic

Passion and Love
Pain and Emptiness
Hurt and Sorrows
So many mixed feelings
Get out of my head!
Memories of us,
Drive me crazy
I'm missin' you baby
I toss and turn
All through the night
Wishin' you was here
To hold me tight.

I walk around like a zombie
'cause without you there's
no life in me.

My love for you grows more and more
Each day by the minute
Your in my dreams, your in my thoughts
Your all I talk about, your all I want
I love you, I need you...
You are my world, you are my hope
You are my God.
I love you...

-Suggas

From the Beat: You obviously feel a lot for this person, thank you for sharing your poem. Now tell us how bad you want your freedom and what will you do to hold onto your freedom and never give it back to such a system?

When I Went to Middle School

When I first went to Middle School, that's where I met all my homies. Until this very day I still kick it with them. But now I'm behind walls, but when I get out, I'll be kicking it yeah.

Middle school is where I started learning about the game. Middle School was better than High School. Middle School is where I meet hella girls, that's where I had all my girlfriends.

-Mike

From The Beat: These people that you started kickin' it with, are they also the friends you started getting in trouble with? It's good to have homies, but are they true homies? Do they lead you into danger? If so, is it safe to go kick it with them when you get out?

ROP-Bound

What it do, Beat? This Lil' Spanky from Hayward up in this max unit, chillin', feel me?

I just got sent to ROP for eighteen months! But forget that — I'm out on that in the parking lot! And I want to say — forget the police, forget the judge, forget the PO's and forget these haters! This Lil' Spank, and I'm out.

-Lil' Spanky

From The Beat: It's like you're in a hole, and you want to pull out a jack-hammer and dig yourself a deeper hole. If you really want to shake police, judges, PO's and haters — do your program; get your diploma; learn a trade; get a job and stay free forevermore!

Sex

sex is my life
without sex
there is no me
sex is my addiction
i am hooked on sex
without sex is like
me without a heart
sex is my everything
my life my soul my world

-Karlitos

From The Beat: You say it's an addiction, but that means everything else you say here is a fiction. 'Cause that's what addicts do, tell lies to themselves to do what they do. Even when it's destroying them, they say it's what they want to do. And an addiction to sex is a poor substitute for a love that is true.

Dumb Stuff

Man I tired of being behind walls.

If I had a second chance

I would not have been with my co part
because being with him is what got me in the mess that I am in.

Maybe if I would have got on the BART
I would have not been outside early that morning.

-Djr

From The Beat: You will get another chance and there will be plenty of other opportunities to make better decisions. The question is are you ready to start living life differently or are you just going to talk?

At Camp

man what's up
this that boy lil' d-t
man i'm just hella
bored at camp
and i just want to
tell my close homies
to be safe man
and be cool in the hall
you feel me
gone

-Lil' Dt

From The Beat: That boredom will do you in. Volunteer for any and all jobs. Get into any and all sports and programs. Stay busy and stay away from trouble born of boredom.

Free Us

man this lil' bee
you know me
and where i be
but me and my squad
need to be free
we go' go dumb
you feel me

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: You've got to raise your mind up off the grind if you and your squad want to stay free, go dumb legally.

What It Do?

what it do
it's your homeboy
from fairfield
i'm just up here at camp
doing my thug thizzle
well it's not too bad up here
i'm also saying what's up
to those that are in lock up
in the hall or jail or the pinta
and you know who you are
well till next time

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Next time say more than this or it won't make our pages. We're not just about shout outs and naming places.

Another Page Out Of The Notebook

Sprays, don't ever approach 'em
Don't get close to 'em
Shootouts ain't nothin' but rock and roll to 'em
Leave yo' blood on the dash, call it ...
Another murder, another page out the notebook
An it' nothin' if you make it

-Bart

From The Beat: We couldn't print your whole rap, because as you know we keep our pages respectful, but we must stay, you do have a serious talent. Find a way to write more poems we can print, and you could be a Beat star!

Life is What You Make It

If you don't think life is good and fun then your life will be boring and bad.
Look forward to life and maybe you will enjoy it.

-Mayonnaise

From The Beat: So like they say, the glass is either half empty or half full. Which type are you, the half full type or half empty type?

Just A Few Things To Remember Me By

Something that I would like to put in a time capsule is the Moe CD. I would also put a Metro phone and bill in there as well.

-Moe fan

From The Beat: We think it's pretty funny that you would put a bill in the capsule. Very original - would have like to have heard what other things you would put in.

Running

Life is time. And it's running out.

-Slim-T

From The Beat: Although extremely short, these couple of sentences definitely makes you stop and think. If time is running out, what are you doing to make the most of it?

How Does it Feel in Jail?

It feel really bad. We are in our rooms for a lot of hours.

-Zach

From The Beat: This is a great beginning, we hope to see more of your writing in the future!

This Messed Up

i wrote in the beat
hella long ago
and i still ain't seen
my stuff three and four
weeks later but
it's coo' 'cause
i ain't listening to this

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: We hope you find this piece, here in the back pages of our 'zine. We do the best we can to bring out a Beat every week with every printable piece, so everyone can listen!

My Inner Self Is Sayin' This Ain't Cool

Something that I would like to write about is coming to this zoo I'm in right now. Man this ain't cool. I'm ready to cut - this place ain't for me.

-Burger

From The Beat: We don't think anyone feels as though jail is the place for them. Make the best of your time in the halls, learn from your mistakes and don't come back.

My Basketball Jersey And Ipod Go In My Time Capsule

I would put my basketball jersey in the time capsule and also my Ipod. I would put my jersey because maybe the team will be around in the future; they could make my jersey a throwback for style. And I would put my Ipod because they would knock my music. All the artists on my Ipod would have died, so they would be more famous than before.

-A-G B1

From The Beat: These are good choices for a time capsule because they can make you remember what things were important fifty years before. Fifty years from now, if you opened your own time capsule, would you want to hear their music again?

On The Outs

I can't wait to get out and get back to the block and handle some business. I was in here for the 4th of July. I would have been on the block, shooting Roman candles at each other. I really do miss my family a lot. Now it's 8:35... I would be in the house eating good food my grandma cooked like BBQ ribs, shrimp fried rice.

Damn, I just can't wait. I really been doing good and just received my 8th grade diploma, so really I'm just sitting in for some bullshhh.

-Junebug B1

From The Beat: When people who are locked up for things they did on the block tell us that they can't wait to go back to the block, we worry that they are setting themselves up for a return trip to the halls. Don't make the same mistakes again, even if those mistakes are just "bullshhh" to you. You'll be out soon enough and enjoying your grandmother's good food. And keep doing good.

My Time Capsule

I would put my favorite movie, "Don't Be a Menace," my football trophies, my picture on the football team, my bike, put my favorite shoes in there, too. My ice and bling bling. Yeah!

-Maurice B1

From The Beat: You have a lot of things that you value. If you were to open your own time capsule fifty years from today, how do you think you'd react to the goodies you put in there? What do you think your life will be like in fifty years? What do you think you'd be putting into your time capsule fifty years from now?

Pimpin' Shhhh

What's up, Beat? This ya boy, Lil' Purp, in the hall. Trippin', man. I been to like three counties. I did like three and something days. My birthday in ten days. Man, this shhhh ain't cool. I gotta go to another group home probably, because I ran and caught another case. But when I go to another group home, I'm just gone pimp it, 'cause ain't nothing out there on the streets. When I come home it's gone be the same people on that block, so to all y'all going home on probation and group homes, just pimp it. I'm out. Holla at ya boy, Lil' Purp.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: So when you write that you're going to "pimp it," you mean you're going to stick with it until it's done, gut it out, right, Lil' Purp? Well, that's all good. You have a righteous attitude. You wrote that "it's gone be the same people on that block," but that's not exactly true, is it? You won't be there!

Time Capsule

Fifty years from now I would want my kids and grand kids to open my capsule and find a Bible first, because the Bible tells how all the us got here. Second I would want them to see a picture of my mom because she was a wonderful person to me and other people. Third I would want to put a blunt in there. Why? Because a blunt to me ain't only a drug. It something that helps you connect to your inner self. Last I would put a picture of my little cousin Zion. He's three years old. Why because I think everybody should get the chance to watch somebody start from the beginning.

RIP Mom.

-Jamar B2

From The Beat: Jamar, the purpose of a time capsule is to put things in that represent the time you live in. Even though we understand why you'd put a Bible and a picture of your wonderful mom in there, the Bible won't be any different 50 years from now than it is today, and that picture won't reveal anything about these times. Strangely, that blunt is something that might well go into a time capsule to show what life is like today — especially if people have learned by then to live without the need to resort to drugs to make themselves complete...

What Is Life

My life is hard. I'm living free and mentally scarred with dreams. I have a mill and enough cars to fill a tow yard. We hit the club and wild out. Forget fake ninjas. I only mess with ninjas that go hard.

-Hot Rod B2

From The Beat: So, who are you messing with now that all of your decisions and choices have been stripped from you — because of the decisions and choices you made?

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm gone go back to my block and be wit' my real ninjas and do the same thang. Ain't nothing changed. I'm still gone get money and do real shhhh, regardless, because I'm the same person and always gone be the same person.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: You know, Lil' Purp, this piece totally undercuts your other piece, the one that "aint nothin' out there on the streets..." so it appears that you're not keeping it real. We're not going to play games with you, though. We'll keep it as real as we can. You have the freedom to go back to the block and keep doing what you do — which is another way of saying you have the freedom to give your freedom up to the system. Again. People who believe they can do the same things without facing the same consequences fall into one of two categories: they are either mentally ill or they are viewing life through a child's eyes. Which one fits you?

Hello, Beat

I'm getting ready to go to Pennsylvania, to a placement. This may be my last time writing in The Beat. I just want to thank The Beat for all the different topics they've used. All the topics were things I had never thought about before.

To everybody still locked up, y'all stay strong and get out dis place and stay out. Also, much love to the ladies in B3. I'll be back in 7-8 months!

-Q-B B1

From The Beat: Thanks for the props to The Beat, QB. As we often say, there is no Beat without you, so we want to thank you. Learn all you can in Pennsylvania, and write us. You'll go in The Beat Without.

What Is Life

Life

Life is a struggle and you need to know how to survive it and to turn up a man at the end of it all.

-Richard B2

From The Beat: So, how to do that? What do you have to do to turn up a man at the end of it? Does being in here make you a man?

I Already Know It

Damn, I have been here for like a month already. I think I'ma turn crazy. Being locked up in my small-ass room, I can hear myself talk and shhh. Nothing to do but to sleep and read. Sometimes a push-up or two, to get my yoke on. My neighbors say that they win a lot of money rollin' dice, but I would rather play cards.

Every day is the same damn shhh. I ain't really learnin' anything from school, 'cause I already know it. I practically make the teachers look stupid, teachin' that 5th grade stuff.

My best part of the day is rec, but I feel like I could have been doing something better, like I could be sitting at home with my parents, watching TV or something.

And damn, I miss my girl. I wanna talk to her right now. Every day is like a year without her.

-Catfish B1

From The Beat: Knowing what you know, why did you sacrifice school, being with your parents and your girl, and doing whatever else that thrills you, to do whatever brought you inside? You weren't thinking of your girl at that moment, or you wouldn't have given this system power to take you from her! Shouldn't you be smarter than that? You're exercising to make your body grow stronger, so what are you doing to make your mind grow stronger, especially since you're not learning anything new in school? What are you reading, and what do you like to read?

My Inner Self And I

When I talk to my inner self, I say I wish I could change some of the things I do or I did, like what I did to get myself in the situation I'm in now. To me, I didn't do anything, but to the laws, "I'm guilty by association." Five people for one crime. Damn. But, anyways, I can't wait until I get out. I go to court Wednesday. I got 1,000 things on my mind. I don't know what to do.

-Ant B1

From The Beat: It sounds like you're a little conflicted on whatever got you here. On the one hand, you talk to yourself about changing the things that led to your current situation; on the other hand, you say you didn't really do anything except be with the wrong people in the wrong place. Can you find a way to focus on just one of those thousand things going through your mind, and write about that?

Time Capsule

If I had to leave a time capsule to my future generations, I would leave a book written by me and put on the book all the thing I've been through so they can know how to go through life without having to struggle, and show them all the things that are gonna make them realize how was life before, so they won't have to go through that same struggle I've been through, and so at the end they won't have to suffer.

-Richard B2

From The Beat: What will be in that book? Will you be telling your whole life story? When are you going to start writing this book? (You know, Richard, it would be much better if you chose only one topic to write about instead of all three. If you look at these three pieces, you'll see that each is just one sentence long, and that's not enough to say anything very important. Next time, pick one topic and think about it, and then write as much as you can about that one topic. Okay?)

Talking To My Inner Self

I think it's good to talk to my inner self and I do it because sometimes it helps me go through things and how to make the best of the problems I'm dealing with.

-Richard B2

From The Beat: When you have a talk with your inner self, what do you talk about? How does it help you?

A Birthday In YGC

You know it's gangsta Menace writin' to you from B2. Man, I'm 'bout to be in here on my B-Day. I'm 'bout to turn 15. Yeah, I know I'm a young ninja and I'm still holdin' it down like what is it. Can't wait till I get out so I can kick it with a girl and not have to wake up and see a ninja in my face, feel me. I'm out and to all doing time, stay up.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: Well, happy birthday to you. We know it's hard to spend your birthday (or any day). But hey, hang in there, and remember that you had to spend your birthday in jail this year to remind yourself every time you are about to get caught up.

Life's A Test

To me life is a test, one big-ass test that is graded by God. Life is a good thing if you look at it for what it is, and make the best of it.

-Lil' Carl B2
From The Beat: Are you making the best of it? What do you have to do for that to happen? What grade would God give you if He were grading you today?

The Test Of Life

Like Perry said, life is a big test. Man, life ain't cool, life is hard. Man, I been going through hell. And I don't know. I been through group homes and the halls too many times. When my life goes well, then I will start to appreciate life.

I been drugged by these damn psychs. to the point I didn't know who the hell I was!

-Bb B2
From The Beat: Besides the "meds" that keep you in a state of confusion, what do you think you need most to move your life in a better direction? Can the hell you've been through help you to avoid some of the mistakes you've made in the past? Are there others (besides Perry) who you feel comfortable talking with about these serious problems? Perry is not a bad model for you to think about, though. He's also been to hell and back. Concentrate on the "and back" part, because there is a way back.

Let This Be A Lesson

I went to court. They said, I'm going to out-of-home placement. Right now, all I'm thinking is just to get my time done and have this be a lesson, the last time in the system. It's not worth my time/life being incarcerated. But I do hope I can pick a placement in the Bay Area closer to my family.

I don't want to go back to Boys' Republic. It's too far and a minimum 12-month stay there. I'm hoping I get out soon and leave YGC sooner.

Well, nothing else. Peace out.

-Lil' E B2
From The Beat: We truly hope this is the final lesson you need, Eric, to understand for real that you are wasting so much by putting yourself in the system's rough hands. Wherever you are placed, we hope you make the most of it. Write us from there and tell us how it is and how you are, and we will publish you in The Beat Without.

The Game Don't Stop

You can take me away from the game but you can't take the game away from me because the game is in my heart and in my mind. I'm loyal to the game and the game is loyal to me. It won't stop, it can't stop.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: You are right, the game doesn't stop but the game sure is not loyal to you — or any of the hundreds and hundreds of children like you who thought the game loved them until they were no more, and the game moved on to the next throw-away kid in line. There are many things that were put in our hearts and minds when we were children by older people in our lives. It's up to us, as we mature, to examine those things and decide for ourselves whether they serve us or not — and if not, to begin to substitute different values in our hearts and minds that are not the result of following others, but of thinking for ourselves.

I Hate Jail

Man, I hate jail. I hate having to ask another man if I can talk or if I can use the bathroom. I hate being in here in the summer. This shhh sucks. I hate getting DRBs and having to stay in my room all day long. I hate having to be told what to do and when to do it.

I hate B2 because we only get one phone call every week and that's only if you write a weak-ass essay. Man, this shhh ain't coo'. Damn, I know I messed up but they don't need to do me like this.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: The purpose of this place is to make you never want to come back. In that regard, it has served its purpose in you. So tell us what consequences you should have to face for messing up the way you did. We're not saying that this is the best response of the system, but only that there must be some response, or else how else will you learn the limits of your actions? So what should that response be?

My Time Capsule

If I could make my own time capsule, I would put a part of YGC in there. Life is a struggle. It's hard times. I will put a song that will represent my struggle. I will put a cannon in to show what we people died by. The Almighty dolla would go in there... that's why everybody funk. A picture of my nephew because he keep me motivated.

-Daddy Stoffice B2
From The Beat: What is the song you would put in representing your struggle? I really like the idea of putting a part of YGC into a time capsule to be opened fifty years from now. Maybe by that time, people will be shocked to see the lives we allowed our children to endure — and the rug of lock-ups we swept the problem under so we would not have to deal with the causes.

Growin' Up

Growin' up around drugs
Never lived like a kid
Was taught how to be a man
Since the day I was born
Grew up to love my money
And never trust a female
I love the things I do
And I ain't plannin' to change
My live is hell crazy
Livin' life like a gangsta
I'm caught up in the system
'Cause I never do shhh right
And never listen
I don't give a damn
'Cause that's the way
You live in the Bay

-Payaso Backs B2
From The Beat: No, Payaso, that's NOT the way WE live "in da Bay." We choose not to. You choose to. You say you love the things you do, so we assume you mean: you love taking orders from strangers, you love the system's dangers, you love wearing other boy's drawers, you love being locked behind heavy doors, you love eating county food, you love sleeping in an all-male 'hood, you love making a three-minute call, and you love being here in the hall. 'Cause that's where you are!

Until We Run Out Of Gas

When I get out, I am goin' to my grandma and stay with her for a couple months, and stay out of trouble, do better in school. I can ride my bike all night, and spend the night at my friend's house and shoot our bb guns until we run out of bullets. Then we ride the mini bike all day, until we run out of gas.

-Lil' Dnice B1
From The Beat: This all sounds like fun (as long as you're careful with that bb gun). Where does your grandma live? What will you do to help her? You don't want to bounce back into juvy for any reason, so be careful!

Them Fresh J's

What's crackin' Beat? It's Menace, and today I want to talk about hustling. The reason why I hustle is because I come from a low-class family. My mom doesn't work and my pops doesn't either. So that why I hustle, shhh, 'cause ain't nobody else going to put them fresh J's on my feet. So I got to do what I got to do feel me?

Every day before I leave my house I set a goal for myself for how much money I need to make and won't leave until I got that. Selling dope is like fishing. You buy the best bait and you let the fish get hooked, but sometimes you catch a big one, sometimes you get the small. But to me money is money. I don't think selling dope is worth my freedom, but how else am I going to get them J's. It all I know.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: Menace, thanks for sharing with us why you hustle. So now it's our turn to share with you... You say you "got to do what you got to do," to put fresh J's on your feet, and we say, NONSENSE! First, plenty of folks manage to live quite nicely without ever having a pair of new shoes at all, so it's not about what you "got to do" but what you want to do. Take responsibility. Second, your comparison to fishing is only partly right. True, both use bait to get the fish, but a fish is not a human being. When we fish in the sea, we eat the dead fish. It's not a waste. But when the "fish" you catch on the block with your dope get hooked, they either come to places like this (or worse), or they end up as dead as a sea bass on your plate — only for no purpose at all. The "fish" you're hooking could be your little brother, your cousins, your friends. Why would you want to poison your own people for your selfish needs? If you are hustling to survive and not just for some J's, that is one thing (but still leads to lock ups), but you need to realize what is important in your life: fresh J's or freedom. What you're doing is to justify destroying your community and yourself, because each trip back to this place makes a decent life that much harder to achieve. Look at your feet. Are you wearing those fresh J's now? Oh, sorry, those aren't fresh J's, they're fresh Bob Barkers. Ever wonder why? Like we said, take responsibility!

It's Gon' Stay That Way

I sit in my room and think about all the bad shhh
I do
People like judging me, but they don't know shhh
'bout what I been through
I been livin' a crazy life since I came in to this world
I never gave a damn, never listened to what I was told
Now I'm caught up in the system
'Cause I'm stupid and never listen
I do what I do 'cause I love actin' a foo'
I don't care what people say
'Cause I'm a gangsta from the Bay
and it's gon' stay dat way

-Payaso B2
From The Beat: As we've told you before, Payaso, if "it's gon' stay dat way," then prepare yourself for a lot more writing — behind bars! You're not going to change and the system is not going to change. So here you are, the predictable consequence of your choices to "love actin' a foo'." You can love it as much as you want, but you'd better start loving this, too, 'cause you're going to experience a lot more of it.

Don't Know What Life Is

What is life? Life to me is a new beginning of life. Or it could be a beginning of a business, home, environment. Also it could be tragic experience. Or a heartbreak or a deadly situation. But, really, I don't know what life is, so if I said some things that didn't make any sense! My bad!

-G B1

From The Beat: Your response made very good sense, G. When you think about your own life, what do you consider the heart of it be? What means the most to you about your life? No need to apologize for this... Your good!

Talking To Myself

Here in the halls I do talk to myself. I often talk about my life, how the way of life I chose years ago affects me still today. I realize that eventually I'm going to have to pay my dues because of things I've done.

I often tell myself that I need to slow down because if I don't, I'm going to end up burning out. At the same time though, I don't want to stop. I've done too much to stop where I'm at. I've put in almost all my life in this. I got too much love for my homies and my clka to just throw it all out.

-Smokey B4

From The Beat: We wish you had as much love for yourself as for your homies and set, Smokey, because you're dead wrong about having put in too much time to stop now. You say you've spent almost all your life in this, but "almost all your life" is small potatoes compared to the time you have left. Why throw your future away because of your past? The reason you tell yourself to slow down is that you can see where your fast life is leading... to a fast end (either as a modern-day slave or six feet under). To commit yourself to that just doesn't seem smart to us. So, what have we got wrong? What do you think those dues you'll have to pay will be?

Back To The Future

If I had a time capsule I would hop in and go to the past so I can still have my knowledge and never come here, 'cause I'm wastin' a lot of time. Freedom is something we're all supposed to have, so I want it back.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: You will have your freedom back, Cito, so the only question is whether you'll be able to keep it... By the way, you wrote about a time machine (that can transport you forward or back in time), but we asked about a time capsule — something you bury in the ground to be dug up in fifty years to remind you of what life was like today. If you were to bury that kind of historical record, what would you include?

My One And Only Goal

Why should I think of money so much at a young age? Why do I have so many things I want and need? It is my hobby to take care of myself, but with all these things and ways of getting money, I am only one who would make it happen. In here it's just a dream. Out back in the world it would be my one and only goal

-John B4

From The Beat: Does taking care of yourself include taking money from others who are trying to take care of themselves? It seems your "one and only goal" in the free world has led you to the slave world. We hope you find a way to take care of yourself that doesn't involve giving the county or the state control over your every move, 'cause right now you're being taken care of in a way that no sensible person would choose.

You Wouldn't Wanna

You wouldn't wanna walk a mile in my shoes
Livin' life as a gangsta that never follows the rules
Always roamin' the streets lookin' for somethin' stupid to do

You wouldn't want to get judged for what you wear
People always stoppin' to look and stare
You wouldn't want to be called a criminal 'cause you belong to the system

Being the type of ninja that never listen
You wouldn't wanna live a life as a gangbanger
Always postin' on the block and in danger
You just don't wanna live the life I live

'Cause it's crazy and I ain't got nothin' to give
This life was chosen for me

I ain't gon' try to change it, I'm just gon' let myself be
-Payaso B2

From The Beat: Do you see any contradictions in what you write? You're telling people that there's nothing nice about the life you lead, while at the same time you have no desire to change anything about it. What's that about? People don't care much about what you say if it is contradicted by how you live. So, if we "wouldn't wanna live a life as a gangbanger," then why do you? You write that you never follow the rules, but it's our bet that you're following them now that you're locked up.

Locked Up

Man, I can't believe I am going to the Ranch for two misdemeanors. Man, I just wish the court know how it feels to be in here. I think I'll already did my time. I already did a month and three weeks here.

I am just waiting for the Ranch to pick me up. Now I miss my family. I missed my uncle's funeral being in here. I never got to say good-bye, but ill will be praying for him and I hope he's watching over me. RIP, Uncle.

-WX B4

From The Beat: First, we're sorry about the loss of your uncle. If he is watching over you, what do you think he would want you to do? Have you ever been to the Ranch? The Beat also goes there, so we would love to read your description of what you find there — the good, the bad and the ugly! Yes, it is hard being away from those we love, and yes, it would be nice if judges spent a week in this place just to get a taste... But since that's not going to happen, it's up to you to do your program, learn what you can, teach what you can... and begin a life that doesn't include coming to jail.

What Is Life?

Life is bring someone into this world that I bring in the life with someone I really care for. When I am bring my child in the world is really important.

Life is staying alive and being somebody in life. Life is me having this baby in a couple of months. Life is letting my girl that is having my baby out of jail real soon. That is what life is to me

-Quincy B4

From The Beat: With a new baby in your life, what changes are you planning to make so that you can be a father? We know that you know there is much more to being a father than just making a baby. Any animal can do that. But to be a father, you must be in your child's life. What will you do to keep yourself free so that you can be what you need to be?

My Time Capsule

If I had a time capsule I would put all the latest clothes trends, my favorite candy, my favorite blunt rap, my favorite drinks and put all my favorite hair products that I used on a daily basis. I would put some things in there that I really hold close to me. Yes I would like to be there when it's open. And I would want my baby sis to open it.

-Iylis GU

From The Beat: In fifty years time, when you are in your 60s, what do you think will be the most surprising thing to find in your time capsule. Do you think the things you put in today will mean the same things to you then?

It's Nothin' If I Fail

If I was to fail my journey or quest to the top
I would not crumble or stumble on my knees
Those that loved me, those that hated me to know
I followed the destiny voice inside

If it guides me down the shadow of depths
I take what I failed from, the none word mistakes
And try to achieve to the top once again

-Lil' Uso B2

From The Beat: Even though we don't know what you mean by "none word mistakes," we like the point you are trying to make. Falling is not the same as failing. You only fail if, when you fall, you don't get up and try again.

Getting Out And Staying Out

Hopefully this will be my last time writing The Beat. I'm about to go to this lil' three-month program. Be out by October and be there fo' my wify and my baby that should be due by December.

I'm 'bouts to be on my shhh, though, 'cause I refuse to be locked up when my baby's born. I ain't one of them other ninjas that has a baby and ain't even there for they baby. That's some sucka type shhh...

Before I stop writing, I just wanna tell my cousin Cito that I gots much love fo' him. I hope he does good in the program that he 'bouts to go to. Keep you head up my ninja, and do what you gotta do to get out!

-Lil' Nicoya B4

From The Beat: We hope both you and your cousin find the tools you need to stay out of places like this. You both have much to offer, and it can't be done from behind four walls. Being a father is the most important job there is (except for being a mother), so don't let your unborn baby down. Now is the time to put your own desires aside and give your child what he needs — and that's you! Make the most out of your program, and good luck.

What's Life

What life is to me? Life is a struggle to not die. In between the period of your birth and your death is a lot of struggle an' accomplishments. You struggle to live another day and during that day you have your daily problems an' hardships, things that just want to make you give up.

Some people just want to give up completely and just die because the struggle is too hard. I'm not that type of person. To me, the struggles are what makes me stronger and makes my accomplishments a whole lot better. The accomplishment is being able to have gone through that day, and know I'm able to face the struggles for the next day, which will make me stronger for the next day, and so forth and so forth.

I believe I make my own destiny. I decide if I'm going to make it to the next day are not. When people ask me, "What if I don't make it and die today," my answer is, "I'm not dying! I die when I want to. When I die it's the day I want to die!"

-Cesar B4

From The Beat: If you're making your own destiny, is this place a part of it? Did you want to come here? If not, then what do you mean you choose the day you die? If you can choose something as vitally important as that, why can't you choose something much less important — like staying free?

Have Fun

Life to me is to breathe and to be free to do what you enjoy doing, to have fun and enjoy yourself.

-C Cheese B4

From The Beat: First, Charles, you can do better than to produce a one-sentence piece in 40-minute workshop! Don't be lazy. And second, what if your fun and enjoyment stop someone else's fun and enjoyment? How can you get your fun and enjoyment without hurting others and (seeing where you are now), without hurting yourself?

My Life

When I was growing up I never thought that my life would end up being like it is now because the way my brother used to talk to me and tell me that he don't want me to live the street life that he lived because he said a lot of crazy things go down when people start seeing you get money. But after my brother A.J. passed away I just picked up where he left off and look where it got me, locked up.

-Lil' Aj B4

From The Beat: First, we're very sorry about your older brother. But second, your story demonstrates something that we say often, and that is children learn by what they see and not by what others say. By living the life he did, your brother was teaching you at the same time, even though he was telling you to do something different. You watched, you learned. Please don't let this happen to those coming up behind you (including your own future children). It is the life you lead that will be the model for the lives they choose. And finally, we want to remind you that even though you are locked up now, this is not the way your life has ended up, because your life is just beginning. You have the power to write your own ending. We know what we want it to be, but you are the writer...

Life On The Outs

Life for me on the outs is good. I mess with my family and my ninjas. We post up in the projects and get money. We go to clubs and parties and mess wit' females.

I get money from them but when I get out I'm going to live life different because I have a child now and I want to be there for my baby girl. I still going to get money but in a different way. I going to get a job so I can stay out of jail.

-KB B5

From The Beat: Well, we're glad having a child has made you want to change how you were living so that you can be there for your daughter. But we wonder why it took bringing a new life into this world to make you give up a life that includes periods like this where, through your own actions, you've allowed strangers to control your every move. What kind of job do you plan to get when you get out?

The 'Hood

Some days when I'm in the 'hood and away from all the fake, I feel better about myself 'cause I know everybody around me gonna have my back just in case something goes down. Or sometimes I go down the way so I can see my family. But the only time I don't like going to the 'hood is when one of my boys get hit. But no matter what, the 'hood will always be the same.

-Lil' Aj B4

From The Beat: The 'hood may always be the same, but that doesn't mean that you will always be the same, or have the same relationship to it. If that life is what is causing you to hand over your freedom to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do, isn't it time to rethink that life?

An Update On Me

What it do, como han estado? Espero que firme. Bueno. (How have you been? Fine, I hope. Well...)

Let me introduce myself. For those who don't know me, this is that Goofy coming out of San Francisco. Bueno homies I've been down for three and a half months here in B5 max unit fighting the three strikes.

Today is July 7, 2006, and I go back to court September 18, 2006. Now ain't that a trip. My PO is recommending YA time or state prison time, depending if you get tried as an adult or a juvenile. I can't do nothing about the recommendation 'cause that's just her opinion. But I'ma do w'at I do and hopefully give a good impression of myself to the judge, que no? The judge only knows my bad side and criminal record. So I gotta have him learn the good side of me. Right?

Well Beat, times up for me. And back to the box I go. Much respect. Keep trucha y al rato.

-Goofy B5

From The Beat: We're not even sure you know your "good" side, Goofy. We've read what you've had to say before; we've sat and talked with you and listened to what you see as your life and we don't think you know how important you are as an individual rather than as a member of a group (feel us?). Of course, we hope the judge can see the potential you bring, but you haven't given the system much more to judge you on than a firm commitment to your "boys" and a history of breaking society's laws in trying to further the laws of the your set. How should you be judged? What should happen as a consequence of your choices? Our fear for you, quite frankly, is that you will wake up one day behind prison walls saying, "Oh, no. This is not what I had in mind at all. I want to go back and do that part again!" And nobody will be listening...

My Disposition

My disposition is on the 17th, and hopefully they send me home 'cause I ain't feelin' no group home. But if they send me to one I'm gon' do my time 'cause I been in this messy-ass place for three months and anywhere is better than bein' locked up in here.

I think they should send me home 'cause I learned my lesson and I'm ready to go home and be on it for real 'cause I ain't feeling being in here. I'm missing out on hella stuff on the outs. Ain't no reason for me to be here wasting my time so that's all I got for y'all for now bye

-Rhonda GU

From The Beat: Is this your first time in here, Rhonda? If so, maybe it's enough to make you want to avoid the same mistakes that brought you here. But if you've been here before, then why didn't learn the lesson before now? What do you plan to do when you get home that's different from what you did before? Do you have a plan? Wishing not to repeat patterns of the past is a good beginning, but not enough. You need to know what you're going to do that will move your life forward, like going to school every day. Are you up to the task?

A Puzzle

If you control the circumference of a man's head, you can control the diameter. Think about it. What does it mean to you?

-Paradise B4

From The Beat: We've thought about it ever since you asked us about it the workshop, and we still find it mysterious. All we can say is we hope you can control the circumference, the diameter, the radius — and the content of the man's head that is on your shoulders!

The Good Life?

Life is good when you're up to no good. I guess it's just the rush of the moment. I'm not saying that that's the only way to get excitement out of life, it's basically what interest you the most. I'm not saying that that's the only way I get a kick out of life.

Life is being in this world stress free, knowing that you're living to die so you shoot for the stars on everything you do while never regretting yo' mistakes and never looking back, keeping your head up, leaving all your worries in God hands, knowing that every day is a brighter day in the sight of God and the wonders and glory of "life".

-Young Boog B5

From The Beat: What does it mean to shoot for the stars? If a child likes the flame on the stove and puts his fingers in it, is that a mistake he/she should regret, or just move on and never think about it again? If the attempt to reach those stars puts your life firmly into the hands of others who now are in control, is that something to learn from and avoid in the future, or just leave to God to settle? Does the God in whose hands you put your life have any demands of you, or is it just a one-way street of receiving that glory but never giving it? If life is good when you're up to no good, then can you complain when there is a price to pay for it? If I get my pleasure by keeping you my slave, does that justify it? Should there be any limits to one person's idea of the good life, or should everybody be totally free to get what they can however they can?

Life And Pain

I'm tried of life.
I'm tried of this life
I want a new one
Can I get one
I'm mad as hell
I'm an angry person
And I don't know why
I'm angry as hell

I always thought that beatin' a ninja's ass would help

But it never does
So what will
I'm being controlled
I am being ran

The man is running me
But I don't want it no mo'
I don't want to feel mo' pain

-Paradise B4

From The Beat: How much do you not want to feel the pain of being under the control of someone other than yourself? By trying to get over on us by getting your turf mentioned (we took it out), we have to question just how sincere you are about wanting a change. The world won't change to accommodate you and your anger, Paradise, and that's what's keeping you angry. You may wish it would happen, but it won't. It's up to you. If you are tired of being run, then stop running the streets. If you are tired of being told when to sleep, eat, pee, then stop doing the things that lead you here, and start doing the things that lead to you taking control of your own life. Go to school. Get an education. Forget about the street that you love but that clearly doesn't love you. (The street is like the Army; it loves you till you die, then it forgets about you and moves on to the next recruit.)

My Time Capsule

If I had a time capsule, I would put my Air Jordans in it. I would put Ya Boy CD in it. I would throw a picture of my whole family because I believe I have the best family ever.

-Franklin B5

From The Beat: When you opened that time capsule 50 years from now, what do you think will surprise you most about what you thought was important then?

I'm ready to go home and be on it for real 'cause I ain't feeling being in here. I'm missing out on hella stuff on the outs.

The Life I'm Making

Cito wanna get out. I've been in here for hella long. Now when I get out I'm 'bout ta smoke hella fat.

Life to me is what I make it. Right now it's good 'cause I'm getting' this over with.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We've enjoyed having you in the workshop, Cito, and thank you for your many contributions. Of course, we worry when all you can think about is smokin' "hella fat," but you know what life is like in here, so if you end up coming back, it has to be because you like it here... Good luck, Cito. We know you can do it.

A Story About Me

Let me tell you a story about me
I was young growing up and the street doing shhh
But being in the beef

Now I am up in jail

It's like my ninja letting me be

I just can't believe the cops got me

I just been on the streets like that's the way to be

Because I stay gutta please believe

I can't believe this shhh happen to me

This shhh just feel like a dream

I need to wake up and start doing me

Do you want to join my team

You feel me

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: Why are you so surprised that you ended up in here, when clearly you were out there on the streets doing your thing. This should be no surprise unless you're going through life with blinders on your eyes. This is the reality that you chose, so if you want a different reality, then make different choices!

I Like Fast Money

The problems in my life are that I am money hungry. I like money especially fast money. That's like how it is in the streets.

-Lysis GU

From The Beat: The rest of this piece is totally inappropriate for The Beat. How fast is that money you're making now, Lysis? Oops! Let's put it a different way: how do you like making money for the system, 'cause that's all you're doing.

My Struggle

I live a hard life. I was brought up in a bad neighborhood where if you ain't bangin' you slangin' 'cause you gotta get dat cash. I'm tryin' to get out the struggle, but it's hard.

-Hot Rod B2

From The Beat: You say it's hard to "get out the struggle," as if it's easy to be in it. Sometimes, we make ourselves do things that are hard to do today so that we can live an easier life tomorrow. Think about it.

Goin' To A Program

What up wit' da Beat? They still got ya boy up in here. All I am trying to do this get da hell out and stay out stay out, you feel me? But I am fixin' to go to this program and do it and get a job and stack up.

-Dq B4

From The Beat: We're encouraged to read that you want to get a job and make your money in a way that won't result in losing your freedom. What program are you going to?

How Much I Miss Being At Home

I miss being at home so much. How I got to lay in my own bed wearing my own underwear and how I got to be with my mom and hang out with my sister and take care of my nephew and be with my best friend Rhonda.

I sit in my room and sometimes cry because I want to go home and be with my family. When I got to court I see my dad and I cry because I see him cry, and I listen to him tell me not to go his way. I cry because he can't visit me 'cause he on parole and he ain't allowed to see me. That's why I would like to go home.

-Jeannie-M GU

From The Beat: Of course you want to go home, J-M, who wouldn't? But why didn't you think of how much you love your family when you did whatever it was that got you here? We're pretty sure you weren't thinking of your daddy then, but of yourself. We understand why you cry and we wish you were at home. But we hope this experience is not forgotten when you get home (and you will), because that's the time to put some thought into what you owe those who love and support you, and not after you've made the choices that give the system power to take you away. Your daddy made the mistake of thinking you would follow his words instead of his deeds, but every child learns by what he sees. What do you want those coming up after you to see you doing? Just remember that whatever you tell them will count for much less than what you're doing.

My Messed Up Life

Hey how you doin'? Hope good. Well, as for me I guess I'm coo', just stressin', wanting to get out. I been here since April and now it's July, but I am getting out on the 10th of this month. I wish you the best and can't wait to see you when I get out..

I'm going to a group home. Hope I can just do this program and get it over with, but I just know I'm going to run 'cause I don't want to do a year and be away from my friends and family...

I just wish everything can get better with life, being in this screwed up system. Man, I'm going through so much shhh... messed up life. It's been messed up since I was a baby. Why? Because my dad used to hit my mom in front of me and did a lot more. I hate talking about it but today I just feel like telling what I been through. Then my mom finally just woke up and left that man.

As I was growing up I used to have bad nightmares, but now I got over it. I'm 15 years old and I don't get nightmares anymore. But till this day I won't ever forget what happened in my life. But I will always forgive my dad for what he did to me and my mom, but I just can't talk to him 'cause I will start thinking about hella shhh.

Well I got to go now, but just keep all ya head up.

-Lil' Shadow GU

From The Beat: You've been through a whole lot of things that no child should have to go through, Lil' Shadow. But by announcing that you're going to run if you go to a group home, you demonstrate that you still have a lot of growing up to do. For one thing, you say you'll run because you want to be with your family, even though running is the one sure way to be taken away from your family. But even more than bringing about the consequences you're trying to avoid, announcing you will run before you have even had a chance to experience what this program might have to offer tells us that you're not ready to think deeply about your situation, a necessary first step to try to address some of the problems that led you here. Wishing that everything will get better in your life is something like wishing on a star. It makes you feel good, but it has no power to change anything. To make your life better, you have to take some responsibility for it, and there's little in this piece to suggest you're ready for that.

A True Story

These topics is hella boring and I'm not interested, so I'm about to talk about my own stuff. Anyways, I'ma talk about my life.

Man, I been through a lot in my young life, it ain't even funny. When I was little I was in and out of group homes because my mom was on drugs, so she couldn't take care of me. I was in a group home until I was about seven, then I moved in with my daddy. Then on Christmas when I was first a teenager, me and my stepmom got into a car accident. I almost lost my life 'cause of a drunk driver.

But anyways, I was took from my dad at the age of the next year because my dad had a tumor in the eye, so I got took from my dad 'cause he was sick.

(To be continued...)

Lil' Shorty GU

From the Beat: We appreciate reading about your life, Lil' Shorty, but to make it interesting to all our readers, we wish you would talk about how these experiences have led you to where you are right now — and what you have learned so that others don't have to repeat your mistakes. Maybe when you add more to this story, those things will come clear. What happened to your dad? Did that near-death experience when you and your stepmom got in that car crash make you think differently about drinking and driving?

Feeling Cool

I am feeling cool

Because you feel me

I should've got out last week

But you see that I am still here

But its cool because I am just here for a reason

But it good because I am going to get out

Do my six mouths and get on with my life

Stay on my shhh.

So I won't come back

Because this not good

I just can't do it

Because I miss being with my family

I been to a group home and back

Because I want to fight

Because I think that it was the way

To let my anger out

But look where it got me

Nowhere but to YGC

But now I am gonna think before I act

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: Young Hitta, as you struggle with these issues in your life, we hope that The Beat helps you think through your decisions. It sounds to us that you have decided to change the path you've been on because your eyes are open, and you can see clearly where that old path was leading. Of course, the new path you're on might seem a little scary because it is new, but the longer you stay committed to it, the easier it becomes. (It's like any addiction; the more days you can build on sober, the easier it is to stay sober.) We'd love to know how things in your life start changing as you move forward with your new plan.

Expressing Myself

Expressing myself is something I love to do. But with the right people. For me I think it's very important to let people know how I feel on the inside. My friends for example. Some have your back to the fullest and some just don't. I learn that they really ain't friends. But some is your family and they always gonna be there for you no matter what. That's why as I grow up, I learn to be more open and again express myself with the right people.

-Julissa GU

From The Beat: We are honored then, that you feel comfortable enough to express yourself in the pages of the Beat, but can you express even more? For example, how are you feeling on the inside?

Time Capsule

If I were to create a time capsule today, I couldn't stuff it with material possession. I would jack pack it with pieces of paper. On those pieces of paper I would write down my problems, my hopes, dreams, despairs, agonies, predicament, my choices — everything going good for me and all the things going bad. It would be buried in the backyard of my first house.

When fifty years pass and I'm an old grandparent, I could sit with my children and their children and open it with them, so I can look back and laugh on how miniscule my problems were compared to all the things I'm bound to go through in the next fifty years. It would show me how I handled myself through the problems and choices I had to make. And my children would have a better understanding of me as a young teenager.

-The Wrek B5
From The Beat: It wouldn't only be your children who would gain understanding about your teenage life, but you too would see it anew, threw the eyes of an elder — and through the accumulated wisdom you will then have gathered. You know what, we actually hope you do just as you've described here. We think it would make for a very useful exercise in the present, as well as future view to the past in which you will see that even in the dark places of your experiences, you brought light. We think that if you can escape the conditions of your life that lead to dangerous places like this and dangerous situations on the outs, you are destined for great things!

I would jack pack it with pieces of paper. On those pieces of paper I would write down my problems, my hopes, dreams, despairs, agonies, predicament, my choices — everything going good for me and all the things going bad.

A Funeral

The first time I went to a funeral was my homie Mono, may his soul Rest In Peace. That was the first funeral I went to and it hit me hella hard when I seen my homie like that. Knowing my ninja ain't never coming back but I know he's looking down on me and he's watching my back.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: We also grieve for Mono, and all the others like him who have given their lives for what appears to us as the meaningless turf wars that seem to define human history. But let's look at this a little closer. You say that you won't get caught slipping, that this kind of fate won't happen to you because you're too smart. So, we have to conclude that Mono was not as smart as you, was not as ready to defend himself as you, was not as sure of his future as you... Is that true, or did Mono think just the way you did before someone took him out of life for all time? That vital, warm-blooded, feeling and thinking human being that once was Mono is no more and will never be again. Is there any lesson in his death for you, or did he die for nothing at all? We took your piece called "I Love The Block" because you've said it over and over. We get it. You love the block. Keep loving it though, and — if you avoid Mono's fate — you'll have all the time you want to think about what it meant to you as you adjust to living life in a cell, an adjustment that every slave who ever lived has had to make!

Uncomfortable

What's up Beat? To tell you the truth, I'm uncomfortable when I ain't got my gun because ninjas wanna take my head. But it ain't gonna happen 'cause I ain't slippin'. Shhh, I rather get caught with it than without it, feel me? I ain't going out like that yet I still have a lot more that I need to do before I leave this earth I'm out.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: Just to keep it real with you, if you keep living the way you are living, we don't think there is much left. You're viewing life without the benefit of maturity, as if the fate of so many people your age who also thought that their guns would protect them but who are no longer with us can't happen to you. The only thing that will keep you in this world (both of the living and of the free) is a change in your lifestyle. We know you won't agree with this now, so all we can do is hope you will grow into responsible adulthood before you pay the heaviest prices of all.

Patrolling

What's up Beat? People think that being a gangsta is all fun and games. I hate people that think like that because one day they say they down but when ninja start getting shot they ain't nowhere to be found. If you a gangsta you got to stay on point 100% never slip up. I stay patrolling the block on my bike to make sure them suckas ain't in my 'hood. I'm out.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: To be honest, Menace, we're getting somewhat tired of reading the same piece over and over. If you want to write a longer piece that explains the seduction of the streets, the reason you believe violence is a solution to your problems, the life you think you have no choice but to follow, we would be interested in that (as long as it observes the Beat's standards of being appropriate). But we're not much interested in reading more of the many submissions you make which all sound alike. You have eight pieces in this Beat (!!!), but you've basically said only one thing: "I love the block." There are seven more pieces that you submitted which we are not going to publish, including six which you plagiarized (stole from others): the song, "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," Anne Sexton's poem, "Courage," John Clare's poem, "First Love," J.F. Hendy's poem, "The Constant North," Richard Jones' poem, "The Loft," and Robert Frost's poem, "The Master Speed." We admire your choice in reading material, but when you pass something off as your own, you are not only stealing from another artist, you are stealing from The Beat. Please don't!

Another Chance

'Sup Beat? Me stressing because my PO wants to send me to a group home in LA knowing that I don't get along with people out there, but he don't care. So I'm asking the judge for one more chance to get off of probation.

-Menace B2
From The Beat: We want you to read all that you have written in these pages, and ask yourself: Why would a judge give you another chance to go back to the block, to carry a gun, to do the dirt you do? What kind of a judge would he be? Blind? Stupid? Mentally disabled? It seems to us your PO cares about your wishes just about as much as you care about the wishes of those you call your enemies, which is not at all. So tell us, what are we missing?

RETURN

Today, Tuesday, July 11, 2006, is my first time in B4. I got here like at right after lunch. I came from B5.

This is my first time in YGC, and already I have been in all the units. When I first got here on February 11, I got sent to B1. Like a week later I ended up in B2 'cause my case was serious. Two days after that, I got sent to B5 'cause they still thought the case was too serious.

I've been in B5 for almost five months. B5 is kinda coo' but it's kinda weak. The counselors were sometimes coo' and sometimes not. Some of them were doin' too much though. The "detainees" were all coo'.

I don't know about here yet. Supposedly this is the best unit, but I don't know. Man, there ain't no kind of form of freedom in there like here. The closest you ever get to the sky there is the birdcage, and the birdcage is what it sounds like. There's the fenced walls that rise like 15 ft in the air, and there is a roof that is also fenced. And in the room the windows are double fogged.

-Meen B4
From The Beat: We do find it interesting that you think our topics are so boring and weak compared to yours... Kind of self-centered, aren't we? To be quite honest, we wish you had written about one of our topics because this doesn't shed much light on anything. Besides the physical setting of this lock-up (which, after all, is a lock-up so locked doors, high fences and double fogged windows are not much of a surprise), it would have been nice if you had shed some light on the terms you use. When you say staff is sometimes cool, what are you referring to? What makes them cool? When you say some are not, what do you mean? Have you learned anything here, or do you think you already know everything you need to know? Is there anything you might suggest to make this program better? We won't use the same pejorative words you used to describe our topics, but frankly in this case, we think those words are more appropriate to what you've written here than if you had written on topic. (And by the way, there is still one unit you haven't experienced...)

The Grimiest Unit

B2 is the grimeiest unit in YGC. Some staff is cool and some staff isn't. Every day we go through the same weak-ass shhh, like getting' time for something dumb. The clothes we get is hella shady. I understand that the clothes is worn by a lot of other people, but at least they can do is wash them better. Some clothes got hella holes and stains. Some of us gotta put baby powder in our drawers.

When we eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, the food is hella nasty and they don't give us enough to eat. Some of the teachers are as shady as the staff. The daily life at B2 is messed up and shady, so what I gotta say to all reading — stay out of jail because it's grimy.

-Yung Dre B2
From The Beat: We want to extend your advice not just to all readers, but also to all writers... like you! If you find life here unfair, dirty, grimy, nasty — whatever — then stop doing the things that lead you here. You say that B2 is the "grimeiest unit in YGC," but have you been to all the units? If not, you can't make the comparison since you don't know. On the other hand, just keep doing what you do, and soon you will have enough experience in all the units to write a report on each one...

If I Stay Off The Block

What I want to do when I go home is stay out da 'hood. I know if I stay off the block, that I won't come to YGC. Help my mom so she won't need no one. Go to school, so I can get a good job, so I can be a football player. You know, B, step my game up.

-Young G B1
From The Beat: We agree that staying off the block is a necessary first step to staying out of here, and that going back to school is the key to a decent future. Don't let this just be a jailhouse promise; keep it!

Why Is Life So Hard?

What life is? Is life what it shouldn't be? Why is life so hard? Why is my life so hard? The type of bullshh I've seen, heard and done compared to those who were born in a rich family, that's not the way life should be.

Why am I in jail when I have had over 20 colleges call my house, send me mail and people to talk to me about going to their schools of higher learning. Because of my need to eat, because of my need to survive in the streets I had to rob people, houses, and gas stations, break into cars to steal: decks, CD players, purses and cell phones. My favorite things to steal outta cars were laptops or even the car itself.

Hustling was always a drag because of my being harassed by the police constantly. Sometimes they even took my money, what kind of shhh is that? But then there's this rich white kid who hustles for the hell of it so he could hang with the black guys. The coldest shhh ever was that all the boys ever did was give him a warning after catching him doin' dirt. If that ain't some racist shhh I don't know what is.

Should life be like this where my race is kept down at the bottom and everybody and I mean everybody as in every other race steps on me and my kind? And when we ask why they treat us so, all they can say is "I'm just like you." But ain't never been to jail, not one time. Don't live in the projects an' got a mother, father, grandfather, grandmother that's on crack or some other drug.

And the thing that gets me the most is that we've been hurt so bad that we hurt our own people. We destroy ourselves without knowing it. The government moves us from our homes, sends us to jail wit'out the slightest remorse. 50 Cent maybe fake as hell but he right, "Death gotta be easy because life is hard. It'll leave you physically, mentally, and emotionally scarred."

-Scott B5

From The Beat: If you're saying that life is unfair, we absolutely agree. But how do you have the nerve to complain about the police taking your money just after boasting that your favorite thing is to steal laptops out of cars, or the car itself? How is it wrong for them, but right for you? Is that your idea of making life fair? Did the person who worked so hard to get the things that you stole deserve it? Was that fair? As far as this being a racist society, no doubt about it. It is. But does that justify you doing as much dirt as you do, even to your own? Does it matter that every time you show yourself to be a predator willing to live off the hard work of others, you add to a stereotype that hurts every black person everywhere, and gives ammunition to the racists? Do you think if you were suddenly turned white, that all your problems would suddenly disappear and that everything would be gravy? If that were so, why do so many white people end up in prison? Why are there more white people on death row than black? If racism is responsible for all, then how come there are so many hardworking black people who do their jobs and raise their families like everyone else, without stealing, hurting others, or doing the things that lead so many young people here? Were they all born rich? Do you have any sense of your own contribution both to the situation you are now facing and to the larger picture of injustice in America? Is it all "their" fault, and none of your own?

Time Capsule

Today I would put a couple things in my time capsule. I would for sho put my grill in there 'cause 50 years from now they probably have green teeth, blue teeth, and maybe orange, you never know.

Another thing I would put is my favorite rapper Young Jeezy. I think 50 years from now he will probably still be tight sayin' let's get it, and I gotta put the homie Wayne in there 'cause that's Bird Man Jr. And last but not least I would put my mom and grandma in there 'cause I would want them to still be alive.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: A time capsule does not keep people alive for fifty years! You're confusing it with a time machine... Your grill and favorite rappers are good choices, because they are reminders of the time in which you are living now. What else might remind you of these times that won't be around in 50 years?

What's Going With Me Right Now

Well, what's going with me is that I am a 707, meaning that I can be charged as an adult. My big court date is Friday and they will determine if I can be rehabilitated. I had to have three experts in my case, two females and one male.

Today the male came and interviewed me. We talked about my life history far as where I was born, grew up at, and who I grew up with, my mom occupation, same as for my dad — basically a rundown on my life.

They also asked me do I feel I can be rehabilitated and if I wasn't charged as an adult where would I like to go? I told them Excelsior Program which is located in Denver, Colorado. I can't wait till my court date. My biggest worry is the 707 part, Well that's what's going on with me right now.

-Ebony GU

From The Beat: What do you think, Ebony? Are you an adult or are you still struggling towards adulthood? It's good that you know where you want to go, but why did you choose that program? What is special about the Excelsior Program, and how did you learn about it? If you do go there, we hope you keep writing us and lacing Beat readers with new knowledge. Good luck.



Talking To Myself About Things

I stay talking to myself about things. I'm supposed to be going to a group home right now. I'm mad because when I go to the group home my mom got to bring me my clothes an' things, but before I go I want to get my own clothes an' things. So I be talking to myself tryin' to convince myself to just forget about that.

That's small. There's bigger things to be worried about instead of being worried about all the material things. I just be saying that to myself. That's it. I wish I could really feel that way about the material things

-Muck GU

From The Beat: We want to thank you for keeping it real, Muck. And we can understand why it's easier to focus on these small things instead of the bigger problems. Wearing your own clothes that you've chosen for yourself can be a big deal, so don't put yourself down for thinking about that. Just try to make your thinking bigger to include those things that aren't about the material but are about who you are and who you want to be.

What Is Life?

Life to me is going through problems. There will be ups and downs and the reason why people go through so many problems is to teach you different lessons about life.

But talking to your inner self, what that mean to me is sitting down and just evaluating your life so you can just look at how your life is going and it's to see the problems in your life and just take time a look at the way your life is going.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: We like your definition of talking to your inner self. When you sit down and evaluate your life, how's it looking? What are you doing to change those things about it that you're not happy with?

Talking To My Inner Self

I ain't never talked to my inner self, but I have said stuff to my self like what I should've did differently or what I could have done better, and cussing in my head to calm myself down.

-Squeak B5

From The Beat: What do you think your inner self is? When you cuss inside your head, does it succeed in calming you down?

Life At YGC

Life is precious you only get it once I'm wasting my life in this place

Feels like it's already ended

Boring days long nights

All I can do is pray

Wishing I'll be out to see my family

Wondering what my boys are doing

Havin' fun party'n without me

I regret it all...

-Franklin B5

From The Beat: Your life has not ended... This is a time-out, a pause to give you time to think about where you've been and where you want to be. It's only a waste if you do nothing with this time. But if you think about the things you are going to do differently — the thing that will move you out of a certain life style that leads to places like this (and then, down the line, much worse places) — then it will be time well spent. You will be out there again, Franklin, so think about what you plan to change when that happens so that you're not in here again!

And the thing that gets me the most is that we've been hurt so bad that we hurt our own people. We destroy ourselves without knowing it.

What Is Life?

Life to me is something you should live to the fullest. Life is also something you should take advantage of. For me I live my life to the fullest. I do the things I like to do. Drink, party, kick it with my friends, and spend time with my family. I also take advantage of life because it only comes once. That is what life

-Pooh Bear

From The Beat: Yeah, we can see you living your life to the fullest: not being free to make your own decisions, not being home in your own bed, not being with your friends and family... If that's living life to the fullest, then we wonder why anyone would want to. Come on PB. Doing only the things you like to do is just how a child views life. It's time for you to grow up.

*Time Capsule*

If I were to have a time capsule I'd carefully plan what I

want to put in it. I'd videotape my life with my friends and family and pictures from when I was a wee little baby. I'd make mix CDs of my favorite jams and my newspaper clippings I have of what's going on around me right now. I'd put the most popular clothes so I can see how much the fashion taste changed. I'd pro'ly make one for myself so I can reflect on my life when I'm old and see if I accomplished all the goals I wanted to do and bury it in my dad's back yard and the other one in some park or something.

-No Name

From The Beat: We wish we knew who wrote this piece because we like all your time capsule choices. Of all the things you'd bury, what do you think would surprise you the most 50 years into the future?

I Make My Life

To me life is what I make it. Like fights, running from the cops, having someone to hold me, love me, care for me, and protect my family. Having my baby was that I had to raise another life that I made with a man who really doesn't ever care about his baby girl. He can stay out of our lives.

-Hollister Demon

From The Beat: It's too bad that you hooked up with an irresponsible boy to make a baby who should have a father and a mother. It's also too bad that you are not in your baby's life right now, so we know you have a lot of powerful motivations to get yourself together and start anew.

Why Me?

Q-vole? What chu doing Beat? Anyways it's your home girl Smokey from San Jose once again. The topic I am writing on is why me? Why did dis have to happen to me? Well, I ask myself why did I have to be the one to pick up da pipe and destroy my life? Ever since I ended up in Walden House PSK, I've been asking myself why me.

I never thought I'll ever get caught 'cause I was always on top of my game. A lot have been happening to me lately. Why is life so hard? Why do I have to struggle in dis place. Why did I have to leave home, to a place I don't even know? I am hellla home sick. I've been here a month and two weeks!

Well, this homegirl is out, but I just want to say to those out there that are struggling keep ya head up. Alrato

-Smokey

From The Beat: Good advice, Smokey... keep your own head up! But your questions seem to answer themselves: you picked up the pipe, you put yourself in a position to lose your freedom, you let a drug control your life... so our question to you is: Why not you? It's understandable that you are homesick, but unless you take advantage of what Walden House PSK has to teach you, you will keep finding yourself in situations far from home...

What Is Life?

Back To Reality...

Stop...

You talkin' and thinkin' too many thoughts,
Yo' mind keep playing games,
Thoughts comin' up and you ain't ready watch,
Start living life what yo' heart is ready for,
Mine keeps playin' games that you can't no more,
Stop...

Get out of that head,

Snap back to reality,

'Cause this life I live, I live

It ain't gettin' the best of me,

Wish I can go back and ask

My past life what is it that's right?

What is life?

-C-EI Smooth

From The Beat: So, what is your heart ready for? How are you going to make sure that this life doesn't get the better of you? When you put that question out there — what is it that's right — what answers spring to your mind?

Me And You

The higher power above will never tear our love
When the night and morning is gone
And the land and ocean from dust to dawn
disappears

It will fulfill and wipe out our tears

and we will be together and near.

The colors of me and the colors of you
will be swished away in this earth of doomed.
Your eyes are hurting me to see all your pain.

You're killing me softly to see your love be
strained.

My dream I woke out of seems like it didn't end,
but I realize that dreams never come to an end.

If I were a bird I would put you under my wing
and fly away to the north until spring.

-Lil' Payasa

From The Beat: If what you're experiencing now is the cold winter, then spring is what follows. Keeping doing what you know you have to do to build on that springtime, and to bring forth a decent life.

Strugglin'

What's up Beat? It's me the Lil' One comin' from San Jose. Well this topic about life is simple. The way I see it life's hard and then you die. What I mean is the life I'm living is not that great. I'm struggling. I'm looking for a familia, but it seems like I'll never find out what it's like to have familia.

But other than that I'm stuck here in Walden with my cousin Sarah. I'm trying to keep my head high but I'm really getting home sick. I'm not used to being away from my homies and San Jose.

Well Beat, this lil' homegirl is gonna check out

-Lil' One

From The Beat: You know, as long as you think of yourself as being "stuck" here, then you show that you're really stuck in your head. It's the life you were living — the homies that you are missing — that led you to your current situation, so if that's all that you can focus on, you'll have to face a lot more programs and lock-ups in the future. Why not take advantage of what's right in front of your nose and not 50 miles away? There is much you can learn, and much you need to learn. Here's your chance. Don't blow it.

Burying My CDs

If I were to bury something that was to be found fifty years later, I'd probably bury my CD collection and some pictures of me and people from my block.

-Maya

From The Beat: This would be a good source of memories of music and family, but how would you play your CD unless you also buried a CD's player? Do you think they'll still be listening to music on CDs in 50 years?

I'd pro'ly make one for myself
so I can reflect on my life
when I'm old and see if I
accomplished all the goals I
wanted to do and bury it in my
dad's back yard and the other
one in some park or something.

It's My Time

What's cracking Beat? It's that home girl Kurby from San Jose up in the Walden House getting recovery. Well, I don't know if this place is going to work because for one, it's too far, and for two, the rules are very drastic.

I'm here with my little cousin Cassandra. I miss San Jose. I miss my mother. I don't know what else to say but stay strong and I'll see you soon.

-Sarah

From The Beat: You know, Sarah, the most important consideration as to whether this program will work or not has nothing to do with how far you are from home or how drastic the rules are. The most important consideration is whether you want it to work or not. If you do, you are more than half way there. If you don't, you could be next door to home, and you'd still fail. It's all up to you!

The Happiest Time Of My Life

The happiest time of my life was when I had my 16th birthday. I got to go to a Raiders game with my family and my best friend. It was fun because no one was upset with each other. Even though the Raiders lost, we all had a good time.

-Raider Nation

From The Beat: We hope that when all this is behind you, you will have many more happy days like the one you've shared with us.

The Happiest Day Of My Life

The happiest day of my life might be soon. I might be getting out in time to be there when my baby is being born. I also want to get out because I want to be with my family and play some hand ball.

-Rene

From The Beat: We hope you get to see your child being born. And we hope you don't come back here.

Most Proud Of My Bro

Well, the person I am most proud of in my family has to be my bro. We have been through so much drama, you don't even know. Ever since we were little, he has been there for me. He stood up for me when kids tried to pick on me. We have been through fights and other bull crap drama. He's basically the only guy I trust in this world because he's the only guy I know who would die for me.

-Young Brother

From The Beat: If you guys were moving in the same positive direction, you could be a powerful force for good. How is your brother doing? Is he on the right path? We hope you'll soon be out and doing well.

The Happiest Moment

The happiest moment of my life is when my baby brother was born. I was there and it was the most amazing thing I've ever seen in my life. I wanted to cry when I held him for the first time. He is the youngest of six. He made my family complete.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: And this is a very happy story. What a great moment - the birth of someone you love.

The Worst Crime

I think the worst crime that you could commit is to rape someone. I don't see how you could do something like that, and when I think about it, it makes me mad. I've heard stories that girls and even guys have gone through and it seems like the worst thing someone could do.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Many of your incarcerated colleagues feel as you feel. Is rape worse than murder, as you see it?

A Poem

I love my mom.
I love my dad.
I love to eat.
I love to sing.
I hate to cry.
I hate to say bye.
I hate spiders.
I like yoga.
I like my friends.
I like flowers.
My life is good and bad,
happy and sad, high and low.
Oh no - I've got to go.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: That just about covers it, we'd say.

The Worst Crime Is So Wrong

The worst crime I think someone can do is commit rape, because it is too wrong. Why would you want to violate someone like that?

-Nick

From The Beat: We don't know the answer to your question.

Heaven Is A Place

When I die I hope I go to heaven, or a place with all my friends and family. That's what keeps me going, 'cause I could spend a very long time in prison, away from my friends and family. It seems too good to be true - relax in Paradise - your dreams become reality.

That sounds real good!

-Rough Road Ahead

From The Beat: Don't give up on this life so soon. Just for insurance, wouldn't it be better to act as if this is it, as if this life is as good, or as bad as it gets? And if that turned out to be true, you'd know you did your best with what you have.

The Saddest Moment

The saddest moment of my life was when my cat got run over in front of me and my mom. We were walking to the corner store and my cat was following me and my mom down the hill. A big truck came and ran over my cat. And my cat died in my arms.

-Jasmine

From The Beat: That is a very sad story. We're sorry it happened. Is there a new cat in your life?

Looking Up To Fools

Spending my life in this room for something I didn't do. That's what happens when you hang with those fools, thinking it's all cool. But when the cops hit the block the thugs run like girls. Is that the type of world you wanna own?

-Alfonso

From The Beat: You know the answer to that one. But we must say, we've seen plenty of women who can run a heck of a lot faster than most men. So, be careful with your descriptions, please.

When I Die

When I die I would like to be shot in the head. I would like to feel no pain. I would like my family not to know when I die. I would like them to think that I am in a place called Paradise, where no pain is ever near. A place where I can rest in a grave. I want no one to cry. I want no one to think of me. I would like to be by myself. Alone, with no one by my side. Just me alone. That is the way I'd like to die.

-Uriel

From The Beat: Uriel, we know that life has been difficult for you, but we want a better future for you, and a better ending, too. Learning can take place anywhere, on either side of the bars. You've proven that you want to learn. We'll try to help you become a life long learner. Someday, it will result in happiness for you. That's our belief and our hope for you.

Rape Is The Worst Crime

The worst crime you can commit is rape. I don't think a person who tries to rape someone should be forgiven. If they rape someone, they are a piece of shhh.

If someone in my own family raped someone, I'd call him a piece of shhh and let the people in jail or prison handle him. I despise that anyone would rape someone just to get some pleasure. I think raping someone should get you 10 to life, or your life.

-Franky

From The Beat: Your opinions seem to be shared by many of your incarcerated friends. More people seem upset about rape than about murder. Can you explain that for us?

Failing Me

Society right now is failing me. For every charge there is an enhancement, like 25 to life.

And I'm sitting there thinking: where did that come from? And that's only the enhancement. The whole system is screwed.

In two weeks I find out what kind of deal they're going to give me. It better be good. So, if any of you guys want to pray for me, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Sounds like you could use our good thoughts. Our good thoughts go out to you who have made mistakes and to those who have been hurt by your mistakes.

The Funniest Joke I Ever Heard

Knock knock!
Who's there?
Banana.
Banana who?
Knock knock!
Who's there?
Banana.
Banana who?
Knock knock!
Who's there?
Orange.
Orange who?
Orange you glad I didn't say banana?

-Apples

From The Beat: Ho...ho... ho.

Funniest Joke

Q: How come one astronaut could not go to the moon?
A: Because they were out of space.

-Shane

From The Beat: That's not what we heard. We heard he was late for the bus.

Serious Question

What would it take for me not ever to come back? Well, first, it would take me just focusing on doing well. Meaning, I want to work on what I want, but with some help from a group program.

-Cherry

From The Beat: That sounds quite possible. Although ultimately we are responsible for our decisions, the support of friends is very helpful in our journey. We are social creatures, we humans. We have a need for solitude and for the company of others. Finding the right mix takes a bit of practice.

The Tallest Tall Tale

The tallest tall tale that I ever heard in my life is about a cow that flew.

-Nathaniel

From The Beat: Which airline did it use?

How Do I Feel?

There's no way to explain the way I feel right now, and what's the use, 'cause no one would know exactly how I feel but me.

-Jessica

From The Beat: The best we can ever do is an approximation. So, approximately, how do you feel?

Several weeks ago we announced that we stopped accepting submissions for the 15th Editorial Note Writing Contest: Turning Back The Hands Of Time. And since then we've published eighteen contest pieces within the last four issues. The five following pieces are our last submissions. Now we'll vote on them and publish the top four pieces again to showcase the winners. Remember the first-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each.

And if you forgot the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story — share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

With that said, we're turning back the hands of time to when we came up with this topic for the contest, and who would've known it would generate so much thought provoking writing? We had a variety of writers send us things for this topic so it's made the competition interesting. Stay tuned for the winners. Hopefully we'll be able to vote and get them published next week because we would really like you to see who The Beat thought put forth the most talent.

For me and some of us it might be too late
to turn the hands of time. But for some of
you, it's not too late you can change your
circumstances for the future . . .

SINFUL

New Folsom State Prison
Repres, CA

If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time

Sin ain't never been a stranger to me,
Crossing enemy lines dropping two two three
And gotten ghost on the 5.0,
Getting ghost on these honeys
Tryna put shackles on me like that foolio,
"Captain Save A U-know" that's the way I lived,
'76 Regal with the cocaine fit and chromed out mitts,
chromed out kicks, swoll chest and flows,
350 rocket baby look at her boast, lets make a toast,
'Cause that's the way I lived,
I struggled through the pain, through the halls and the
pen.
I survived that shhh, my mama cried in fits,
I broke my B.M's heart and ain't seen my boy since,
But that just the way I be, sin now and suffer later,
Revolution, my dreams, this poem may seem negative,
But just sit back relax and let me finish this shhhh
Observe and peep the twist, and please don't censor my hit
let every piece of puzzle fit.
Back to da script, if I could turn back the hands would I
flip
Back the pages of my life would I change?
Would I have lived differently?
I doubt it seriously,
I would have faced similar hardships and maybe worse
things,
So lets toast to this journey I've survived.
Now I'm 25 and my thirst for knowledge is relentless,
I'm ready to rejoin society,
I'm ready for the intricate life that awaits me.
It's not a part of the plan, obtain a degree, shake the scene,
And be there for my son and niece as a free man.

"Turning Back

The Hands Of Time"

JESSE BONILLA

Corcoran State Prison
Corcoran, CA.

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

If I could, I would turn back the hands of time back to the time of a lil' kid the age of five without a care in the world. The reason I would want to turn it back is because now I am serving a 35 to life sentence in a maximum security prison. Locked down 24/7, watching my whole world crumble, losing everything I love — my family and girlfriend. Because of sickness or things that are part of this life which is out of our control and to sit here and watch and not be able to do nothing is death itself.

Now it's too late I had many chances but I took life for granted being a cowboy that thought jail was fun and never thought I'll have life sentence. And now that I got it. I want to turn back the hands of time. Be a lil kid. Treasure life. Those special moments with the family, picnics go to school and treasure those school dances, those special award ceremonies, going to the park with friends, playing sports, staying up late studying so I can become somebody, help people, so I can make wonderful memories I never had.

For me and some of us it might be too late to turn the hands of time. But for some of you, it's not too late you can change your circumstances for the future...



BRITTANY CULLISON

California Youth Authority (Ventura School)
Ventura, CA

Think Of A Moment In Your Life That Has Shaped Who You Are Today

For this Beat Within contest topic, I was forced to look long and hard into my past in order to find that one life altering moment/event that has truly shaped who I am today, and to be one hundred percent honest, it opened a Pandora's box of my not yet healed hurts. There is not a lot I can remember about the period of my life before foster care, but the things I do remember, I doubt I will ever forget.

This is a difficult topic, because I truly feel that many moments, throughout my 17 years of life, have had a major part in molding me into the young woman I am today. I will, however, choose one, but before I tell about it, I am going to give a little background leading up to it.

It finally began to make sense, my family's misery and poverty, when I was awakened on my sixth birthday by a loud thud coming from outside my siblings' and my bedroom, it took me a moment to fully rouse from my sleep mode and observe my immediate surroundings. The first thing I had noticed was the smell, strong and potent like that of cat piss on a carpet, left alone for a week, unclean and neglected. It was awful, I sat up, wiped the drool off my cheek, and looked to my side where my brothers Michael and Jimmy were sleeping soundly, unawakened or disturbed by the noises that had startled me. My sister Anna-Lisa was sleeping about two feet away from me and my brothers. I remember that I was wondering what she was dreaming because her eyes were moving but her eyelids were closed. She'd looked peaceful all the same.

We were all spread out on a pile of unwashed clothing that our mother had neglected and left on the floor. I got up and tried the door, but it wouldn't open. Some times when mom and dad wanted to be left alone they'd tie our doorknob to the bathroom's door knob with a pair of panty hoses to keep us in. I hated it, but could do nothing to prevent it, so I looked around the rest of the room, and my heart sank to my stomach when I finally laid eyes on the wall below our bedroom window. It was smeared with mustard and fingernail polish.

My first reaction was dread, "Oh no, Annie, what have you done?" I thought, and then almost instantly that dread became anger, then rage! I went to where my little sister was sleeping and I hit her with all the strength a six year old could muster up against her five year old little sister. I hated her right then, I knew what was going to happen when the mess was discovered and I knew that it'd be ugly, and it was all her fault, I hated her. On the first blow she was awoken with a start, and screamed bloody murder. I told her to look at what she did, look at the mess. I asked her if she liked spankings and that's why she did it. I told her I'd give her all the spankings she deserved.

By this time my two brothers, Michael and Jimmy had risen, and informed me someone was untying the doors, so I stopped and went to cover by them in the corner. "Please don't be mommy, please Jesus, not mommy", I prayed silently. The door flew open and it wasn't mom, it wasn't even daddy, but it was ok. Because after looking wild eyed in shock around the room and at my screaming sister, she looked me in the eyes, hers a mirror reflection of my fear and overwhelming confusion, said, "It's okay baby, you guys are coming with me." This lady was a stranger, old, white and, well, old, but she was my angel back then and, actually, still is today.

Her name is Nancy and she is a retired social worker/C.A.S.A worker and an awesome lady. That moment in my

life, I believe, was the single most important moment of my life, the day I met Nancy. Previous to her arrival into my life, I had known only pain, neglect, and suffering, but she showed me that there is a lot of good in this world. Gave me a reason to want to live. When I got taken away from my mom and dad and placed into foster care, I was finally re-united with my sister Laura, and I hadn't seen her since she got taken away. It was great, this feeling I had, but it was good.

Nancy had a friend name Susie, and Nancy and Susie would come once a week to take me and Laura out to dinner, the movies, a park, or wherever, and we had the chance to learn to be kids again, something completely foreign to me then. Nancy taught me right from wrong, manners, etiquette at the table and in fancy places, and other things that helped me become the absolutely charming young woman I am today. Because she loves me, I was able to learn how to love in return, and today even, I can't help but have a heart. So many small blessings she's given me, in such a short time. I have known Nancy for eleven years but only had the pleasure of being her C.A.S.A kid for two of those. The little lessons I've learned from her had such a powerful imprint on my head and heart, that even years on the streets has hardly faded or dented. I found out about what had happened that fateful day I met my angel, but that is not important. What's important is they were sick, and that I shouldn't hate them, but love them more and pray for them, at a distance of course. She taught me how to forgive, a skill that has followed me even to CYA. Yes, and again I reiterate that I believe that day, moment, and event to be the moment that has shaped who I am today.

Not entirely but pretty much half of who I am, a big piece, actually. Who am I? I am Brittany, I am Loca, I am me. Who is Brittany? Well, she is intelligent, charming, sociable, respectful, selfless, helpful, artistic, sporty, and forgiving. Who is Loca? Well, she is street smart, easy going, down for hers, respected, no-nonsense, suspicious, on her toes, money-minded, and a survivor. Put the two together and you come up with me. I'd like to think that in spite of all my short comings, I turned out pretty well, but it's myself I am talking about so I tend to be overly biased. Ha, ha.

I hoped all the readers of The Beat enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it. It just tickles me to imagine what every individual might be thinking as they read my thoughts, gives me something to focus on. Ha, ha! I'd like to close this with a few shout outs starting with one to the 150 Crew for their talented and creative writing, I got one for the boys at the Youth Guidance Center B-5 unit. "Stay up and be good to Mrs. O' Neil. She great, take care of her.", that's my message to the B-5 boys. One to Vincent Williams because I am in CYA so I can feel his pain, and because when I read some of his pieces, my heart breaks, and bleeds for him. "God bless you mijito, I have you in my dailies to the heavenly father, praying for your safety, salvation, and sanity. Be at peace with your life, and if it becomes too much, just offer it up to the Lord. I promise it won't hurt nothing to try it. One love."

I have one for Ray Sanchez Jr. "God bless you, may you be serene and tranquil in your chaotic environment. God bless your father, may he be healed of all his earthly ills, and when (if) the Lord decided to take him soon, may he be welcomed with open arms at the heavenly gate. God bless your little princess, and may she be as beautiful and inspiring as her daddy's words. You are a wise and spirited writer, my friend. Keep writing to The Beat, I love to read your thoughts, I truly do."

I have a shout out to a former Beat Within writer by the name of "Broken Glass." Girl, if you ever read this, I was feelin' them poems that were featured every week there for a while. Keep it up!"

My last shout out is to The Beat staff member, Dave and Mervyn. "Hi Guys! Hope you like my piece!"

With the utmost respect and sincerity,

GREG JOHNSON

Pleasant Valley State Prison
Coalinga, CA

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Although this submission may be past the deadline, I still feel compelled to write on it. To me, the question/topic itself is a conundrum. A catch 22. Some would readily turn back without hesitation, especially if it would free them from incarceration, while others may let things be.

If I were to 'turn back time', I'd return to my conception and choose different parents for I believe we have control over that. I ended up being a product of my environment. Lousy home life, abusive parents, but I'll never use that as an excuse of who I became as an individual, as a man. I don't know how my life would've been different. Does anyone? One can only speculate and assume or even fantasize.

I definitely would have been there for my brothers and sisters more than I was. I haven't seen them since 1993. I never had the opportunity to say goodbye. Having it my way, we never would have separated.

Had I spoken up against my uncle for a crime he committed, but I was convicted of, in 1994, I never would have done time in Colorado. All those group homes sucked. But I stuck to my personal code: family first, everyone else later. But I was betrayed and in return, I paid the consequences.

Had I decided to use protection during sex, as my girlfriend and I had agreed on, I wouldn't have been a father at 16. Had I agreed and conceded to her wishes for an abortion, I never would have experienced the ultimate gift.

Had I never gotten on the wrong Greyhound bus, I would've never landed in San Francisco, met the people I did, experience the unique cultures. My travels never would've included L.A., Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, Ft Lauderdale, Miami, Pittsburg, and New York City, all before the age of 22.

Had I decided to stay in Denver in 1999, as many people asked me to do, I wouldn't be serving 25-LIFE for murder. Had I declined to be the designated, I wouldn't be where I'm at right now. And if it weren't for David Inocencio and Pacific News Service, I never would have known the potential I had in writing creative words, in expressing myself in writing poetry.

To turn back the hands of time as tempting as it is to do so, NO!! I would not. Everyone has once upon entertained the thought about reversing time, in one aspect of our lives, whether you're incarcerated or not. The experiences I've had are priceless. Imagine if you turn back time, you wouldn't know the people you know today. You wouldn't love the people you love today. I have two daughters; one of them just wasn't here on earth that long. The other will be thirteen in June. Never mind turning back time, where has the time gone?

The expression, "Had I made a left instead of a right," my life would be different. The problem is, we did make that left, or we did make that right. We have no supernatural powers to change what's already occurred. We must live in the present. Questions will always arise as to why we "made it" in life. Why we are the ones to be born. Everyone has a purpose in life but most never find out what it is.

We're floating on a ball in the middle of space. Try explaining that. As they say, "It is what it is." You are who you are. Live life today for what it is because in an instant it could vanish. Make the most out of it. Some will succeed and others will fail. But it happens for a reason.

That's why I wouldn't turn back time. I'm content with my memories throughout my life. Sure I wish I weren't incarcerated but life doesn't end yet. Children please, open your eyes. Take in life. Take advantage of what it offers you.

Peace and respect,

ANTHONY ROMPREY

San Francisco County Jail
San Bruno, CA.

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Would I turn back the hands of time. No! That's merely a saying because of the pain and suffering we have endured due to our mistakes in life/game. The game is an up and down thing — nothing to be played with. If it's not in your heart or if you don't need to be in it, don't get in it because it's hard to shake.

I'm a young homeboy in it for life. No, I wouldn't turn the hands of time back because if I did I wouldn't have endured the struggle that life has brought me. It is imperative that one feels what the struggle is like so they can take in the pain and suffering and figure out for one's self if that's the life they want to lead. Of course I've endured pain. It's not about how much pain I've had in my life, cause it's a lot, it's about how I've handled myself throughout these periods of pain. Without the pain I've endured, I would not be the soldado (soldier) I am today.

As of now, I am incarcerated in San Francisco County Jail fighting, for two decades plus, of my life. I wouldn't change any part of my life because I was born in the game. Right now I am down, but soon I will be on top again. Remember ups and downs. I am being blamed by a neighborhood snitch for a falsified act I did not commit. All in due time the truth will shine harder than those 24 inch rims on yo' neighborhood balla's car. I love my life and especially my one-year old baby Xianna. She turned one on May 25th.

If I did turn back the hands of time, she wouldn't be here and there is no telling where I'd be and what I'd be doing. Also I wouldn't be sharing this real life piece with The Beat and all the young homies/homegirls reading this!! To all the young men and women incarcerated just remember that "Nothing is forever, and what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger." If you think you got it bad, just keep in mind that there is someone, somewhere who would change places with you in the snap of a finger, if it was possible. So when you look in the mirror and ask yourself "would I turn back the hands of time," just remember you wouldn't be looking at the same person you are today.

A Warrior Within,

The game is an up and down thing
— nothing to be played with. If it's
not in your heart or if you don't need
to be in it, don't get in it because it's
hard to shake.

MONROE COUNTY JAIL

As the following description makes clear, these remarkable contributions come from young people in the Monroe County Jail (they have all been tried as adults) in upstate New York. Like all the best writing from Beat writers, these young people describe lives of desperation: the pain of jail — isolation and loneliness, the pain of hurting their families, the pain of absent or abusive fathers and mothers unable to provide, the pain of loss and the pain of feeling lost. This is our second installment and we will have one more for you next week. It's amazing how many of you take part in finding yourselves through creativity. We are honored to publish some very fine poetry from New York State young people trying to understand their lives and circumstances, while trying to make us understand as well. The following paragraph describes the program:

The following pieces are from the Monroe County Jail in Rochester, New York. They are submitted by Dale Davis, Executive Director, The New York State Literary Center. The writing resulted from an Empire State Partnership, made possible by The New York State Council on The Arts, between The New York State Literary Center and the Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs. The partnership is grateful to Dr. Manuel Rivera, Superintendent of Rochester City School District, for his commitment to diversity; C. Michael Robinson, Chief of Operations, Rochester City School District, for his pioneering foresight in education; Margaret Porter, Program Administrator, Rochester City School District's Youth and Justice Programs; Patrick M. O'Flynn, Monroe County Sheriff.

Consciousness

My mind wrestles with itself,
attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable.
My consciousness dives down
further
and
further inside me,
seeking to regain reality,
seeking to find some stable point in the universe
to which it can cling.

-Laurice



Jail

It's Hell to be in here.
I never would have thought that at the age of nineteen
I would be serving five years in prison.
Jail will break your spirit if you let it.
You have to remain strong and be a strong man.
When I get letters from my people in the world
and I sit in my cell and read them,
sometimes they make me smile
and sometimes I want to cry like a baby
knowing that for the next five years
I have to listen to another man telling me what to do,
when to sleep, when to lock-in,
and when I can leave this place —
which is a no place for a human being to be.
The thing that hurts most
is knowing that I am under someone else's control,
knowing I am no longer my own man.

-Eric

Where Is Home

I am living my life
in a world that is full of sin,
on the streets I call my block,
and in this building behind walls and bars that we
call jail.

I use survival as substitution.
How can I make money for a future for me.
Trying to get money on the streets I call my block
landed me in this building behind walls and bars
that we call jail.

Where is home?

I see myself
standing under a sunset
far from the gang sets, violence, and discrimination,
trying to live a righteous and sinless life,
no longer on the block trying to eat.

I'm sorry for not being there son.
I'm sorry.
Your daddy wishes he could borrow back lost time.
You see I'm not a lost man.
I can admit to my mistakes.
I praise the Lord for making you mine,
and I hear your heart calling for my time.
I am far from committing a crime.

Son,
I thank my family for lending a hand.
I am going to show everyone I am capable.
I know I am able to send a fine message.
I want these lines to be my message.
People think to show love is an art,
to show love is the best part.

Son,
I am not demanding your forgiveness.
I am asking for your understanding.

Where is home?

I am tired, but I can't sleep,
so I know I'm thinking something deep.
I try not to think back,
but what is here still remains a fact.
So in the best way I can,
I'm going to try to be exact.
My son is in me; my son is in my heart.
There is more than me,
all I can say to my son is
in me is you; in you is me.

Where is home?

-Brinden

MONROE COUNTY JAIL (CONT.)

I want a wife and kids.
I want to show them the world
is not the mistakes their daddy made.

God Gave Me One Chance For Freedom

Back then I was only fifteen
living my life in jail,
but now I'm about to be twenty
still in a dark room.
I want to teach kids
it's not good to live your life in jail.
It's a mistake.
If I could take it away I would.

I live my life in the worst 'hood.
I'm about to be twenty.
There are two ways to live in the Roc:
One is the hustle,
the other is to be dead.

The Roc is a Hell hold city
where there is no life
but robbery and killing.

In my future
I want a wife and kids.
I want to show them the world
is not the mistakes their daddy made.

A guard opens your door and you walk out.
It feels like you are shining
with the devil looking out of your window.
Looking at the stars can't even help.
If that is the life you want to live behind bars,
don't change.
Just know what it is like to have your freedom taken away.
-Alex

Dark Hole

The place where I live
is a dark hole,
and I am all alone.
There is no one to care for me,
or no one to love.
I have lived my life in and out of lock up
since I was thirteen,
and when I wasn't locked up
I lived my life in the streets playing the block or running
a spot.
In the streets
I had to worry about beef and even more the police.
Ghost town,
that's where I live.

The streets anAd the block
were the only way of life I knew.

My heart is colder than sandwich meat.
Home to me is wherever it is safe.

I am living my life in an orange suit in jail right now.
Right now my home is jail.
I am trying to move on with my life,
trying to move from here.

-Derrick

Every Day

Every day I feel pain
knowing there is no way out,
thinking to myself when will that day come,
stressing in my cell thinking about the people I
love and hurt.
I ask God for forgiveness.
I was living a crazy life,
selling, smoking, fighting, roaming the streets,
staying out all night,
hanging out with the wrong people.
I thought this was the life to live.
Now I am in here,
and I see this was not the life to live
I have no freedom.
I'm living behind bars for most of the day,
sleeping on a thin mattress,
eating nasty food,
living around a lot of people I know nothing about.
Now I know the life I was living leads to jail
or being killed.
Being in here, I have had a lot of time to think
about what I want to do with my life.
I know I am a smart young man.
I made bad choices that messed up part of my life.
When I get out of here,
I want to get my GED
and get a good job.
I will leave the drugs alone
because drinking, selling, or doing is not the life
to live.
I have a son who loves me.
I want to be there with him.
I want people to look forward to me doing the right
thing.
To anyone who is in the situation I was in,
feel my pain
and please make a change.

-Marcus



MONROE COUNTY JAIL (CONT.)

My Place

I don't have a place in the world
because everywhere I go
is not where I want to be.

Everyone I love
disappears and leaves.
Sometimes
I think I fit in places
but one minute someone is my
friend,
but then another minute
they are not.

I fit in with my children
because they are a part of me.
Sometimes
I can't believe
that they are free.

I am lonely every day.
I get up in the morning in a cage.
I can't see the day.
I am by myself
with no one to talk to.
Lonely hurts.

I lost a life.
There was no way I just did.
My son, the oldest of eleven, was five
years old.
I have eight boys and three girls.
I never knew my place in life until the
first one's head popped out.
Then I knew I was a father.
And just like that five years later he
was taken for no reason.

Sometimes
I want to give up.
Something stops me.
Life itself stops me.
I have ten other children who deserve
a father.

You are gone my little one.
I wish there was a way to bring you
back.
I cry all day,
and I cry all night for some way to
bring you back.
You are gone, and it hurts.
You are gone.
My five year old son, you are covered
with dirt.

Listen to my heart my son.
You were the beat.
You were life coming out of me.
Now my heartbeat has been taken
away.
It is no more.

I am lost with nowhere to go.
It is like I am holding on with a rope.
It feels like life is slipping away
without saying goodbye.

Sometimes I am scared
to shut my eyes for the night.

I don't know if they will open the next
day.

For ten years I have been on my own
with nowhere to sleep,
nowhere to eat.
My eyes have bags under them
from all the restless nights.
I am tired.
My soul is weak.

I know I am on my own.

Things are hard.
Sometimes I think I am doing the
right thing but I am not.
In some people's minds right is when
I went to jail.

I am nineteen years old.
I have ten children.
I have seven boys and three girls.
I love them more than I love myself.
This is how it all started.

It is dark, cold, wet, and lonely.
The only thing I see are cages and the
outline of my cell.

Sometimes
I hope to feel the air outside.
In a cell there is nowhere to run,
there is nowhere to hide,
there are no games but cards.
I am scared
because some people tell me I am
going home,
and some people tell me I am going
upstate.
I am surrounded by nowhere to run.

I don't dream.
Life is not what it seems.
I live in between broken dreams.

I don't dream.
I don't have dreams.
Why can't I dream,
is it because my dreams cannot come
true?

I don't dream
because it's not where I bleed.
I don't dream
because when I close my eyes
there is a pitch black light behind my
eyelids.

I almost lost my life,
almost lost the fight,
almost lost the love that is held
inside of me.
Now you know
why my dreams are lost.
I am not where I want to be.

I'm in jail
locked up without a key.
I'm locked up without a dream,
scared to sleep,
scared to eat.
I am in jail, not a place I want to be.
I'm in jail.

I came a long way to where I am now.
It was out on the block that put me
here.

I have a long way to go
before I leave this point in life
for where I want to be,
a long way to go.

I feel so alone, so empty.
It seems like being filled with
blackness and evil
is better than being filled with
nothing at all.

Life was so painful
that it couldn't have been worse
if I had been covered with boils from
my head to my feet.

No one who has not been there can
possibly understand.

I have had enough of the lies.
I have had enough of the ones who
died.

I have had enough of scary dreams.
I have had enough of me.
I have had enough of the life
that everyone in the world is trying to
fight.

I have had enough as you can see,
just once in our lives let us be free,
free from guns, drugs, bodies in the
street,
free from the evil that is inside me.

Matt,
you listen to me.
I'm going to talk to you about this
once and ever again this same way.
There are some things
no three-year-old boy in the world
should have to be told,
but the way things should be and
the way things are hardly ever gets
together.

The world is a hard place Matt.
It doesn't care.
It doesn't hate you and me, but it
doesn't love us either.
Terrible things happen in the world,
and they are things no one can
explain.

Good people die in bad, painful ways
and leave the folks that love them all
alone.

Sometimes it seems
like it's only the bad people who stay
healthy and proper.

The world doesn't love you,
but your momma does and so do I.
You're a good boy.

You grieve for your brother
and when you feel you have to cry
over what happened to him,
go into a closet or under your covers
and cry until it's all out of you.

This is what a good son has to do.
This is your job in the hard world, to
keep your love alive
and see that you get on no matter
what.

-Laurice

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S FACILITY STATE PRISON

The other week we got a package of writing from Chowchilla, CA. Some with no name, others with no title, but what we do know is that most of it was done by a woman named Sable and another woman named Crystal. From heartbreak to self-discovery, these women talk about many different experiences. And we know first hand how hard it can be to showcase these secrets about yourselves, so we appreciate you for that. Hopefully, they'll feel comfortable enough to write us individually rather than sending these packages. We'd like to know who you are as individuals — that would be great. But if not, please don't hesitate to do this again. You are all very talented poets.

Who I Am

To be strong and bold
To be loud and proud
This is who I am
Standing still,
Like the earth beneath my feet
I am who I was meant to be
From the day of my birth,
To my journey unknown,
I am here now, the brilliant revelation
to my family's new generation
a genuine creation
I am here to make a change
This is who I am
There is no mistaking me for another
Gentle embraces, soft words, sweet touches
My intellect reaches far beyond
Your world of understanding
This is who I am
A gentle breeze, much like my needs,
Appear fairly simple and carefree.
Forgiving and honest,
With my own sense of purity...
So many thoughts, ideas, and recollections,
Unspoken memories – for I am simply me.
This is who I am

-Sable

Standing still,
Like the earth beneath my feet
I am who I was meant to be

Take Me As I Am

Take me as I am
The arch of my back as I stand upright
The boldness in my face
The smooth touch of every curve
Take me as I am
With every imperfection to my acknowledgment
And even those I can't admit
take me as I am
embrace my individuality, my wisdom, my youth,
And divine spirituality
take me as I am
No need to curve my tongue, I make my mistakes...
For I am still young
Take me as I am
Only my god is the judge of me
For I am what I set myself to be
Take me as I am
Watch how I grow
The things I accept, the things I know...
I am only one person...true to myself
Never the need to hide
For I am what I am, and who I am is me...
Never duplicated; one of a kind
As you can surely see
Take me as I am

-Sable

My True Passion

Music is the blood that flows through my veins,
Throughout my entire body,
Music is my passion
Calming, healing, pleasurable, painful, and joyful—
Music is what keeps me going
Music plays as I eat, sleep, dress, and bathe,
Music is my every existence, always in my head,
Perpetually playing throughout the day
To hear, to feel, to appreciate, and examine,
Music is much more than sound
It is a form of communication
Music: with words or without—
It is open for interpretation,
Music is what drives my soul,
Music is what compels my every step,
Music is my calling.

-Passionate Musician

I'd Never Leave You There

I'll wait for you in my heart
But not forever in my mind
'Cause life still must go on
And I have to move on with time
Though I'd rather us move on together
You decided to move on alone
You left me lingering, wandering...
Wandering with nowhere to roam
Nowhere to roam
But in my own pity and pain
Not knowing what to do
With the feelings that remain
You left me to walk alone
With no particular destination
Left me wondering what happened
You left me, with no explanation
You left me in a deserted place
A place where all I do is sulk
Hoping that one day you would return
You left me with that thought
You left me in a dark place
A place where the sun doesn't shine
The rain barely even falls
You left me with no one to call mine
You left me in a mysterious place
A place where I dread to be
Somewhere where I'm not myself
Somewhere where I'm lonely
You left me in a place with little feelings
A place where there's barely emotions
The only thing left I can feel
Is pain, turmoil, and commotion
You left me in a place
That is way off track
And you didn't even leave me any directions
To find my way back
You left me traveling alone
Feeling so lost and confused
And I'm still trying to catch up with you
Because it's you I don't want to lose
And though you left me in this awful place
A place so lonely and sad
I just wanted to let you know
That I would never leave you in a place like that!

-Crystal Hamed (Two Hearts)

Epidemic Of Sorrow

From the waxed concrete floors
That never seem to really come clean
To the muted shades of color
On the fixtures but not on the walls
There must be something
That seeps from the stones
That's permeating the people here
And causing some sort of sickness
That no medicine can cure
It must be the air that drifts in (so stale)
Or maybe the sun that seems to burn
(Instead of shine)
perhaps there's something in the water
that they make their coffee with
or could it be that someone came in with it
and is breathing it into the recycled air from the vents
whatever it is that's causing this epidemic of sorrow
I wish somebody would do something about it

-A. Graves

Without You

I sit here and wait
For the heat of summer
To come again
To melt the frost
From my cold, dying
Heart
Frozen with longing
For you
I sit here and wonder
What you're doing now
If you feel as lonely as
I do without you

-A. Graves

Where is the time to laugh? To smell the roses along the way

The way life should be as we move from day to day

Reduced

Where are we going? Where have we been?
As this question comes to mind,
It's hard to believe I'm here again
Who's looking out for me? Who's standing by?
Another day of loneliness, far too hurt to cry
Where is the time to laugh? To smell the roses along the way
The way life should be as we move from day to day
Why can't I see clearly now?
Why clouds instead of the sun's gentle rays
With so much beauty all around me, no love to come my way
Why aren't my nights peaceful? Why aren't they calm and serene?
Why is life this way? Why does it have to be so mean?
God, help me to understand, before I lose my way
Help me to understand so I can see things your way
It's easy for me to see I'm slipping again
My trust grows less each day
I'm finding it hard to laugh and love and even more difficult to play
I need a little help from above, a simple sign will do
A little help from someone greater than me
And the only one I know is you
God, please help me with this, and make it quick if you please
For this life has me slipping fast,
And I'm already on my knees

-Crystal Hamed (Two Hearts)

LIL' SMOKEY

Starting off with a letter to all the readers of The Beat and ending with some really good "Questions," Lil' Smokey drops a bomb on us this week. As he sits in Preston, one of several California Youth Authority institutions, we can tell he's been doing some introspection and coming up with some great answers. Too often are we bombarded with thoughts that'll keep us institutionalized, so it's nice to hear someone trying to break themselves out of that. Especially since we're assuming the Youth Authority isn't offering many services to support people who genuinely want to rehabilitate. We admire your courage and hopefully the rest of our readers will follow suit. Let's wait and see...

Beat

What's crackin' everybody? I just wanted to say to keep your heads up and to remember that they can't keep you incarcerated forever! What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Be cool and don't sweat the small stuff. I'm ghost.

My Choice To Destiny
I just went to court today
The judge gave me some bad news
The case I wanted so badly to win
I couldn't help but to lose
He told me I'm a smart kid
But I could see it in his eyes
He's just b-sing me
It's all just a disguise
He said I had my chances
And that I should of turned my life around
He said I chose my own destiny
Going home is truly abound
I wanted so badly to cry
But my eyes refused to give up tears
My heart's beat skipped inside
When he gave me those seven years

Questions

If you'd seen what I've become
Would it make you want to run?
Would it make you want to scream?
Would you wish it was just a dream?

If you knew that you don't scare me
Would it make you start to fear me?
Would it make your heart beat fast?
Would you be sorry about the past?

If you knew what I'm about
Would it make you start to doubt?
Would you repent from your sin?
Would it corrupt you from within?

If you saw how it would end
Would you choose to break or bend?
Would you think it was strange?
Would you ever choose to change?

Reality

Hello, is anyone there?
Is this reality or another nightmare?
It's hard for me to tell anymore
Nothing is the same as before
And nothing can ever be the same
It's surprising how things can change
Sometimes at least to me it seems
That this reality makes less sense than dreams

JEREMY TOWNER

This is definitely a Beat issue to hold on to. New writers are blossoming, O.G.'s are teaching like never before, and books are even being published. This next piece is Chapter Three of Jeremy's autobiography "Con-flicted," and it is utterly amazing. He took us on a ride through parental disasters and meeting long lost family members in his first two chapters — gripping to say the least. But in his third chapter, he ventures off as a child rebelling against all authority as a way to feel liberation in not having to answer to anybody. And what better place to do that, than in our very own San Francisco. And on Haight Street at that. We guess that if you want to be liberated, the best place to go is the most liberal block in the most liberal city. Makes for a real good book review, huh? Well, with this writer, reviews wouldn't fully capture the painful, yet freeing experiences he's been through in this chapter. From feuds with his father to meeting a new girl, we think this chapter is the best so far and the first two were incredible. He writes to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. The conclusion will be coming to a cell near you next week. So be on the lookout for Jeremy Towner.

"Street Smarts" Chapter 3

Everyone has a path. And it is one trod upon by many. At the end of this path is our goal whatever it may be. Upon this path we will stumble, or fall, we may stray even, but we always come back to the path. We gain with nothing to lose because we can only learn from what we do. And somewhere along this path we ponder upon our past to try to gain some prophecy of where it will go. With this wondering a seed of wisdom begins to grow. Experience will be it's food and time will be its nourisher.

When age progresses from childhood to adulthood our wisdom grows with it. Eventually becoming a tree of knowledge. Some people's knowledge will bear fruitful to the world. Others will bear none. Yet it is knowledge either way.

So with the neglect of a goal to work for I start my own seed of wisdom. I have abandoned my old life of another and adaptation will have to be an overnight process. Lucky for me, I still had one friend.

His street name was Jester. Not particularly funny except his size thirteen feet. No he wasn't funny at all but he could get money from people like I've never seen nor heard of. He would ask for food so I could survive. He also taught me how to steal from stores and homes and where to sell the stuff I stole to get more money. It was a very interesting way of living. I think that that is why I was hooked to being homeless because I could finally shed free all chains of responsibilities and values.

I could now prove to the world that I could take care of myself, fend for myself, be and do whatever I wanted. It was also the thrill of exploration. To see the world, the cities, the small towns, the suburbs, dare to walk through the worst neighborhoods and make it back to tell about it. This is what I was looking for. This was my right of passage and my right to manhood.

The first city that I went to was ironically the city I was born in. Good old San Francisco with its big buildings to blend into, it's parks and beaches — so much to see and explore. I felt like a child in a fantasy world who's going to his first medieval fair. I wanted to explore every nook and cranny. Find out what the world was hiding behind these doors. Maybe even find a place to live for free for the rest of my life. Some secret that only I knew about and no one else.

But nothing is ever what it seems no matter how thorough you are. You could plan events down to a tee but they never go exactly as planned. Dreams always out of reach.

Mostly, while I was on the street, I was intrigued about the adventures and lifestyles. So I joined in on the lifestyles and started drinking again and smoking pot. It was mostly drinking though that was the party maker. It brings out the mischief of man and control over your soberness is now a careless feeling that you let go. It seemed like so much fun.

After awhile of living in the city and learning the ropes I started to want more. More parties, more adventures, more friends, more, more, more...then the hard drugs became an abundant part of my excitement. They were as more as I was going to get. But what fun I had. What mischief and chaos I caused. All the while not seeing my own life slipping away faster than I could realize it.

I got quite a wake up call one evening in the city. I was sitting outside of Cala Foods on Haight Street with my friends. They were all shootin' meth getting ready for an evening of walking the city streets when from around the corner comes my father. I didn't know what to do. I was scared and angry all at once. A part of me hoped he would walk on by and dismiss me as if he didn't recognize me. But it was not to be so. The second he saw me he knew who I was. I tried to get up and run in the other direction to get away but a heavy weight held me down. I looked to see what it was and saw my dad's friend Ben. Then I knew this was to be an intervention of sorts. I struggled with them and kicked and screamed but to no

avail.

I was so confused. This man wanted me gone and now he's taking me back? I wanted to hit him. Hit him hard as he hit me. I wanted him to feel my anger as it landed blow after painful blow. But something held my hands steady. That something was the moral obligation to my father. My flesh and blood to be respected and obeyed.

I still loved my father. I don't know why either. Was it something that I felt I had to do? I don't know. At the same time I detested him. I rebelled against him and blamed him for all of my mistakes, my life, my pain and suffering. Where was my compensation for the life I've been dealt to live? Where would it balance out and how? Only more questions with no answers to fuel my hatred.

They took me back home to Santa Rosa. As soon as I got him I went straight to my old room. It was not my room anymore but a reminder of something that should've never been. I had nothing in it a teenager would have. Just stuff from my childhood. I guess I never grew up but I felt older in my mind. Like I gained wisdom from the experience of living on the street and now applying it to my life I knew. I don't belong here. This is not a life for me because there is no inspiration, no lessons to learn. No life to live. And so the next evening I ran back to the city where I could belong, where I could learn what I needed to and learn from what I learned. Or at least that's what inexperience was telling me.

When I was back in the city that night I went to Golden Gate Park to sleep and think. I should be weary now that I know my dad will come for me. What the hell did he want? All my life he made me feel like I was a burden, or something more to look after like one of his pets. One minute it's a fatherly display of affection and the next agitation and annoyance. It's like he couldn't make up his mind.

But it's night. I'm free again. No worries about being caught. It's just me and the quiet night with the stars in the sky. Free just like me they shine a magical display of wonderment upon the sleeping world. How could people sleep through the most beautiful part of the day?

A couple days go by with no disturbance. I guess my pops got the idea that he can't hold me. I wasn't his little coward of a son anymore. So my guard drops and that's the last weary act to let go. So I lay in the front of Golden Gate Park on a sunny afternoon, I'm stoned into stupidity, and this woman drops right onto my lap with all of her weight. God has answered my prayers.

Her name was Akasha and she was Canadian or something. I don't remember much about her because she had me wrapped around her finger. I was still ten percent innocent until I met her. She was the first woman, of a few, to sleep with me in that ever so...well, you know.

I was a pup all over again but I had the confidence of a badass all of a sudden. I would do anything and go anywhere she wanted me to. It turned out she wanted to go to Seattle, Washington. I never would have thought of going to another city so far away from my family but my family seemed better off without me. So we talked it out and planned it and figured we would need some cash for the Greyhound so we used our "panhandling" skills and scrounged up some cash but we were still short.

Then one day while we were about to get back to work I look down the street and lo and behold my father is walking the streets again. As he walked down the sidewalk towards me I crouched down in front of a parked car and then bolted across the street. I tried to make a break for the park but another unexpected surprise waited me. My uncle Todd but I was still not ready to go back. So I bolted back across the street, which then caught both of their attention as well as other passer-bys, hoping to lose them uphill. Turned out I wasn't in the best of shape to keep going. So they caught up to me and I sat down defiantly waiting. He wanted me to come back home. I said I didn't want to because I don't trust him. So my Uncle Todd, God bless him, says, I can stay with him if I come back. The deal is done. The trust between me and my uncle was stronger than that between me and my father's and my father knew it. Probably frustrated by it, but I've had enough of his irresponsible ways.

The funny thing about being someone's kid is the wisdom you receive from the adults. My father always told me, "You have to take responsibility for your own actions." But when my father did something irresponsible he had an excuse or reason for it.

They shouldn't do that. Should they? Maybe there's an excuse as to why they should? My favorite to hear is, "Because he's the adult," that still doesn't give him the right in my mind.

When we arrived back to Santa Rosa I was taken to my uncle Todd's house for the night. I wanted to run but I also wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt. So I stayed and talked with my uncle and Aunt Heather. I told them what was happening. Then I went to sleep on the couch in the T-V room. I didn't go to sleep immediately though because I had a lot on my mind. I always liked to lay back and think of the better times in my life.

My favorite memory of a good point in my life was when me, my

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sis, and my dad were staying at my grandma Cindy's and grandpa Jim's house out in the hills of Santa Rosa. Some of the best land I've seen was right there. I remember the sunny days of adventure seeking. I would dig holes in the ground hoping to find something. I'd go swimming in the creek next to the house or play on the tire swing.

Once I left the house to see the spread out neighborhood. I went across the street because the people who lived there had a bunch of horses and I liked to watch them. That day though someone saw me and asked me if I wanted to ride one. Of course I did. So they put me on a horse called Judge. He was seventeen, hands and big but gentle. I took him for a canter around the property to somewhere where I could be by myself and just enjoy the moment of being there at that time. They don't last long but it's worth it.

I always felt safe there at my grandparent's house. Like we had a normal family again, if we've ever had one before, and being with my grandparents was great. They were always happy and understanding. They liked to drink but that was a part of who they are. My gramps was a Coors man and my grams was a wine woman. Me? Well, they just gave me some apple juice but that was fine.

Sitting here under the stars I would remember these little bits and pieces and then I'd shut them out because...Well, I really don't know why I would do it, I just did. To linger too much in my past would keep me away from the inevitable future.

The next morning when I awoke it was to the grateful boot of an officer patrolling the park. Immediately he asked for my name and age. I've been through this all before so I told him some bogus made up name and age.

If the name has never been arrested then you're not in the computer. Therefore you can get a slap on the wrist and be on your way. No cops want to haul in some dirty, probably diseased, homeless kid unless it's a serious crime.

So after receiving a ticket and a few wise words I went to the McDonald's on the corner of Haight and Stanyan and sat down

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

by the newspaper boxes and began to beg. I'm not proud to do it but breakfast was calling. After I got about five dollars in pennies, dimes, nickels, and quarters, I went inside and bought me a breakfast meal.

I wanted to find Akasha so I stayed at the restaurant because eventually all the homeless come here at least once a day to eat. Sure enough she came to me. Right when she saw me I stood up and with all her might she tackled me. Right there in the middle of McDonald's on the floor with her on top I made the decision. We'll go to Seattle by bus. But we'll make a stop along the way.

After meeting up with my girl again we gathered a little six or eight man posse of gutter punks and made a plan. Then we went to Larkin Street Youth Center to get some more food. Plus we could hang out and watch T-V if we worked for it. We did a couple chores here and there. But if we wanted to smoke we had to go outside. The one thing we liked about the center was because no cops could come in. So if they were chasing you, you would pop in real quick and they would have to wait until we get kicked out.

One day while waiting outside the center with Akasha in my arms I see once again my father's truck. Instead of running this time though I went straight to his truck. Persistent he was, but I would not go back. Not to that life. So I got inside the truck with my father and we talked and I left to go back to the center. It was the last conversation I would have with my father for a while.

Two days later me and my "friends" started our journey by bus to Seattle. We figured we'd ride the county busses as far as we could and hitchhike the rest of the way. When we reached Santa Rosa I decided to pay a little visit to my home. I needed a blanket for the nights and maybe some other things.

It went downhill from there. To be continued...

KEVIN MCKAY

Writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, this next writer is

one of our more dedicated. He always has something to share with the rest of us. And it usually comes in the form of a lesson. He directly talks to the younger generation and he does so with so much passion, you have to feel him. In "Make Them Care" he speaks of accepting responsibility and knowing what part you play in your life. Make them care by owning your mistakes and learning from them for no one can help you if you don't want it. Advice told to us by many, but never as direct as when Kevin McKay says it. He leaves us with some words to live by and this is where his wisdom is truly apparent. Thank you for your kind words and keep teaching us because there are many things we haven't yet learned.

Words To Live By

Be true to you
Show the world what you can do
Live a life you can be proud of
Give thanks to God above
Honor your mother and father
Because tomorrow, they may be gone
Love yourself enough to try
'Cause for this earth we are not long."

Make Them Care

Sometimes no matter how long you sit with a pen in your hand and a piece of paper in front of you nothing comes. You almost start wishing your hand to record your thoughts, even if unconsciously. So you will at least see some sort of progress. But at these times there's nothing.

Does that mean I don't have any thing to say? Hardly. I can't remember a time I didn't have something to say. Its just sometimes making that jump from mind to paper is about as easy as sending a rocket to Mars. It's not going down.

But then other times, the pen just goes on its own, with no problem. Keeps up with the Bazillions thoughts flowing through my mind. I like to write, I like to give advice, to help or at least think I'm helping. That's why I write to The Beat. The Beat is helping, and I want to associate myself with a team of people who help.

But what do you say to someone you wish to help. But doesn't listen? What can I say to you kids to help you? Can I say that I've done all that B.S. And look where it got me or don't do as I did? If I say that will you listen? No!! And I know that.

The reason I know that is because my own father told me that same stuff, and I said to myself, "Whatever." I said to myself and even believed that I was somehow different. That I had some sort of super powers over drugs and alcohol, that I was invisible, I made rational decisions, I told myself "I got this."

So the fact is I know you won't listen to any stories of

the past.

And at the end get a sudden epiphany to make whale sale changes in your lives. It just does not work that way. And I also know that a lot of you don't create the situations and environment you live in, but you are responsible for what you see when you look up from this page. If when you look up from this page, you see four walls and a locked door, at the end of the day you are responsible. And if you were locked up got released and accepted the conditions of your release, and did not meet these conditions, look no further than the mirror. Save yourself and your loved ones a lot of grief and don't instantly start blaming the P.O., the court, the teacher, the cops, and your homie. Because in the end it's on you to take care of you.

If it's wrong and you know it's wrong, and you do it anyway, it's a chance you are taking with your life. I did it too, I'm no exception. Stupid? Yes. Blind? Bluntly. Sorry? Absolutely. Responsible? A hundred percent. But look, I'm not a preacher or a counselor. I'm just another convict who knows where you are heading. And I know you can easily say to yourself, well F it because no one cares about me anyway.

That may seem true but it isn't. I care, The Beat cares, and when you think no one cares is when you should care. You should make them care. Make them recognize success. They won't unless you do.

Look at the walls that surround you. Is that what you want to see?

Take care stay strong and in health.

RAY SANCHEZ JR. Have you ever read something so powerful that you felt like reading it over to make sure it was really what you read? Well, if you haven't, this next writer, who all Beat readers probably know, will surely blow you away. For not only does he compose a beautiful symphony of rhyme schemes, but he also conducts ideas that actually make you think. Not boasting about where he's from, nor is he 'impressed by guns and clicks, mainline time or how you pimp', but staying true to form he's a man on a mission. A mission to teach anyone willing to learn, or spark any passionate heart willing to burn. In "Dear Folks And Faculty," he lets us know where he's at and what goes on there without beating around the bush. Sort of proclaiming, "This is where my life led me, and though on the inside I'm living the 'happiest days of my life,' my environment is still ugly." From the mind of wise man to pages of *The Beat Within*, we give to you the ideas of Ray Sanchez Jr., who's writing these priceless gems from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

Lovely Suicide

Love is suicide
'Cause every time you go
A piece of me dies
A piece of me cries
A piece of me tries
To hold on to the magic
That we shared in the night.

Happiest Days Of My Life

My happy days remain the same
Knowledge up and laced with game
Don't regret the guns and 'caine,
'Cause those thangs is what made me, man
But I regret the pain and tears, suffered through a victim's fears
Remorse (a feeling I never knew)
Tells me that the old me's through
My homies feud, as homies do, pissed about the clicks and crews
Do thei' time and pay thei' dues
Write me and boast 'bout how they do
I'm not impressed by guns and clicks, mainline time or how you pimp
How you sit up in a SHU (should it change how I feel about you?)
Ain't you more than dirty deeds?
Misplaced greed, weed and speed?
I think I found what makes me, me, so as we talk I plainly see
You can change or stay the same
Homie, know I feel your pain
I had to grind to my happy days,
They call it grindin' 'cause you grind away
Collapsing from the weight and strain
I found my freedom in a cage
Yeah, on the streets I could walk away, but my mind was still a slave
Tryin' to get laid, tryin' to get paid, tryin' to avoid that minimum wage
Who would have thought I'd get it right
Sittin' here in prison
Livin'
The happiest days of my life
These are the happiest days of my life
For the first time in awhile, I can smile
No mo' worryin' 'bout someone trying to cancel my breath
Like a bad check, a bad hex
Placed on my chest
These black magic mornings gave way to sunny afternoons
And in the eve of my life, I hope I get to hold my wife soon
Time well spent, focused on some home improvements
The body is a temple and the mind'll keep it movin'
Keep it doin' what I do
Enjoy the sweet perfume
As I stop to smell the roses
Told ya' I could do it ova, souljah
Hold a boulder burden that was placed upon my back
Feel the pressure from the stretcher
Gettin' shot fo' gangs and crack
Now I'm comin' back from the inside of a cell
They may have shackled my body but they freed my mind as well
Finding inner peace, the inner beast I put to rest
Born alone, I stand alone, don't need a gang for stress
And I know I am blessed
'Cause I hold your hearts and ears and eyes
These are the happiest days of my life.

On my yard, you a G if you own your own shoes,
Yo' own jeans (creased clean),
minimize state blues
A watch, a chain, one solid gold rang
90 bucks a month is considered doin' thangs

Dear Folks And Faculty

Dear folks and faculty,
It seems there has been a tragedy
Cats breakin' down tribally, ghetto gang rivalries
Society's then collectin' 'em, massively ejectin' 'em
Prison systems packed wit' them. They racially profiling sons,
Guns, drugs, and bubble guts driving us to act all nuts
Octane on performance plus; living years in weeks and months
Making up lost time drinking wine, dining dime girls
Smokin' big in chocolate swirls; diamonds, gold, expensive pearls
On my yard, you a G if you own your own shoes,
Yo' own jeans (creased clean), minimize state blues
A watch, a chain, one solid gold rang
90 bucks a month is considered doin' thangs
Washin' clothes in toilet bowls, improve upon yo' morals
You didn't have 'em on the street but better have on level fours
Pros at bookin' lookin' sideways at better days
Dreamin' beyond the wall, but that wall gonna be their grave
Slaves to the ways hate keeps us in a cage
'Cause right about now I'd rather be free making minimum wage
And I don't put that on, that's my mothalovin' word
I'd give up all my icebergs just to once again see them street curbs
I heard my city's changing, improved, rearranging
Ghettos still ghetto, and bangers still bangin'
But there are new civic centers, movie theatres, and stores
Superficial improvements like make-up on whores
Can't afford, anymore, to take no shorts, I'm way too poor
I gotta score negative points if I wanna leave this joint
Let me point out without a doubt
Our downfall is that we forget this lesson once we make it out
Once we make it to the house
I hope this ain't the case for me
18 mo' years, man I just can't wait to be free.

what I fail to understand
is how a society that
considers itself humane
and decent can give up
on its children.

DWIGHT ABBOTT/SUNMAN'SLIGHT

Although the following was written for The Beat Without, it was published first by the NAM (New America Media) two weeks ago. In this piece, Dwight Abbott — who has been contributing to our pages as SunMan'sLight for some years, and who has had a relationship with The Beat for many more — explains why he wrote his searing description of having grown up in the California Youth Authority nearly fifty years ago. The book, *I Cried, You Didn't Listen*, was first published in 1991 and has just been republished by AK Press. Only by reading this remarkable description of the brutality inflicted on the children in this state system of juvenile injustice can you do justice to this book. No description by us will come close to capturing what this man — and thousands of others like him — have experienced in the institutions of our own creation. The book is available either through AK Press (www.akpress.org/2006/items/icriedyou didntlisten). Please read the Editor's Note on page one for details on how you can get your copy (at a reduced rate for prisoners, which includes those in juvenile halls and the "new" California Youth Authority). While the following describes the "why" Dwight wrote this book, the Editor's Note in the issue you now hold in your hand describes "how" he came to write it from the deepest, darkest hole of solitary confinement as a way to keep himself sane. We are extremely proud to be able to present even these small descriptions of a book, which we hope will unlock the hearts of those in control of our locked-up children, and we are eternally grateful to Dwight for dedicating this book to The Beat Within.

Why I Wrote: I Cried, You Didn't Listen

NAM Editor's Note: Dwight Abbott, currently locked up in Salinas Valley State Prison, wrote the book, *"I Cried, You Didn't Listen,"* first published in 1991 and now reprinted by AK Press, to expose the widespread abuse of incarcerated children. He has written a sequel and is seeking a publisher.

SOLEDAD, Calif.--What began as a distraction, something I hoped would help me to retain my sanity as I sat inside a dark and fixtureless solitary confinement cell for five years, became a "diary," if you will, that would later evolve into the book *"I Cried, You Didn't Listen."*

Though I realized I would likely be made to answer to my peers for exposing the dirty little secrets we keep hidden through our lives, I knew I had to give this story to all who might now be willing to read it. When faced with the choices between peer retribution or the chance to expose -- and hopefully end -- the widespread abuse of incarcerated children, it was not difficult to choose. I had no idea that my exposé would nearly get me killed -- not by fellow convicts, but prison guards!

Beginning in 1961, through the 46 years I have been incarcerated within the California state prison system, nearly every prisoner I have ever become acquainted with was first incarcerated while a minor child in the California Youth Authority (CYA) -- a powerfully dismal fact when you consider how the failed and dysfunctional youth penal system prepares children for the even more dysfunctional and failed adult prison system. The thousands with me here who were state-raised inside the CYA (newly called the Division of Juvenile Justice within the newly named Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation), are testament to the profound degree of that failure. They represent the consequences of the unchecked, progressively brutal administration of the state's juvenile institutions in place of the nourishing care and treatment that are the necessary prerequisites for "rehabilitation" to take place. Because our political "leaders" are in bed with the powerful guards' union (CCPOA) -- which hands out millions of dollars in campaign contributions to those who will do their bidding -- our incarcerated children continue to be beaten, sexually abused and confined in environments that are too often more psychologically destructive even than what adult prisoners must endure.

Newsworthy events these past several years confirm these conditions: Several children have committed suicide while being "cared for" inside solitary confinement cells; youth have been set up by staff to engage in "gladiator battles" for the amusement of staff; young boys have been videotaped being beaten by staff while face down on the floor and handcuffed behind their backs; sexual and physical abuse by staff on wards (not to mention by wards on wards) continue to occur. And while we hear endless promises of reform, experience tells us that these promises will not be kept as corrections officials strike a pose for the cameras, then duck for cover and wait out the storm they know will pass.

As someone who has spent the better part of his adult life locked up, I can understand how difficult it is for the public to be sympathetic to our plight. But what I fail to understand is how a society that considers itself humane and decent can give up on its children. In the festering conditions that we have allowed in these institutions, even the meekest of the meek, feeling left with no other choice, will eventually turn and fight like tigers for the sake of their souls, for in the end, the evil done to them will be the evil they do in turn.

I lived these conditions, and it is the "education" that I received there, which I spelled out in my book, both as a way to expose conditions that our officials will deny exist (and which too many of the public would rather not know about), and as a way to recapture a sense of my own childhood that was stolen from me. It was from the darkest and deepest hole in our deep and dark prison system that the tears -- and the words -- finally began to flow in a stream of brutal memories that became *"I Cried, You Didn't Listen."* In turning to face the demons that were engendered in me then, I have written this book in one last desperate hope to bring us to our senses, and allow us to see our children -- all of them -- as our future.



THE POETIC PRISONER

It's a sad fact when our state blatantly shows no regard for their future. For if children are our future, then the state is treating its future pretty bad right now and has been for a long while. For though The Poetic Prisoner aka Will Roy, is honored and grateful to be a part of SunMan'sLight's amazing book, "I Cried, You Didn't Listen," the reason he was able to be a part of it is because the same injustices and brutal ways of dealing with our children, that went on back then, are still going on now — close to fifty years later. The desperation and compassion Will spills from his pen is evident in "CYA Is No Mystery." Then he closes with a poem about how fighting against the system politically, reminds him of those times when he was incarcerated and in turn further fuels the fire that keeps him fighting. We guess it's sort of like a cycle of liberation. AK Press just re-published SunMan'sLight's book and these two pieces are featured in the back. We've already published these pieces in past Beat issues, so don't be surprised if you've seen/read this already. For information on how to receive a copy of the book, please look to this issue's editor's note as it will tell you there. Oh, and by the way, Will writes from our office and gets off parole in one week. Congratulations Will, we can't wait to hear a poem about how you felt the day you got off. Let's be free...

CYA Is No Mystery

Over the past couple of weeks, media people have bombarded me. It seems as though The California Youth Authority has become a hot topic all of a sudden. "Have you ever been in The California Youth Authority? Can you describe the injustices that went on in there? Describe the 'cages'. Explain the pain. Dig deep into your soul and muster up all those horrific experiences."

These are the words that spread through my ears like a disease as I sat down in an office chair while letting this stranger pry into my life. I tell the story because there are thousands of people who can't tell their own story.

It just took two suicides in the same week for professionals to finally take a peek at The California Youth Authority's (CYA) faults. What they found were inhumane cages, unjust conditions, and an institutional conspiracy to punish and not rehabilitate. What were the professional researchers who give their lives to statistics doing when they saw CYA's recidivism rate at ninety percent?

And even now that they're aware of what's going on, why aren't any youth that have experienced these hardships in the media? Why are our professional advocates constantly overshadowing our voices? I would ask these advocates to ask us how CYA should be reformed.

In 1997, I was arrested and the police threw me into the maximum-security unit of San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center (YGC) at sixteen years old. It was the first time I was ever locked up, so I wasn't suspicious when my public defender told me to plead guilty.

After I pled guilty, I was quickly sent to The Youth Authority in December of '97. At first, I was housed in O.H. Close and they labeled me as a member of a gang called "The Bay", which doesn't even exist on the outside. They justified it by saying it was a way to categorize me for safety and security reasons. But the fights I got into wouldn't have occurred if I didn't have this label forced on me. And those fights got my time in there doubled.

After one of these fights, I was sprayed with a river of mace and thrown into solitary confinement. I spent 23 hours a day in a cell by myself for a month. The hour I didn't spend in my cell I showered and sat in a cage by myself with nothing to do but stare into space. This is what they called recreation. When my mother came to see me, I was put in a fluorescent orange jumpsuit and wore handcuffs accompanied by shackles. The 'peace officers' used to joke and call it jailhouse jewelry.

After my stay at O.H. Close, I went to fire camp. When I got there it was summer time, so I was fighting fires as soon as I found out where my bed was going to be. We would fight the most colossal infernos, and it was strenuous work. However, it gave me a very real sense of accomplishment. I

only stayed at fire camp for a month, though, because my falsely labeled gang membership caught up with me. I got into a fight and the camp quickly moved me out of there.

They shipped me to N.A. Chaderjian and this is where I did my hardest time. I slept three feet away from my toilet, so the smell of feces and urine became my closest neighbors. I could hear brutal beatings, sexual assaults, and violent threats through the vents of adjacent cells. I had to lay face down on a two-inch mattress—which was on top of a block of concrete—with my hands behind my back, just to get a tray of rancid mystery meatloaf put in my cell.

The education system in there was so bad that I've seen people unable to go to school for years because a member of their gang got in a fight. And the medical services were worse. I tore two ligaments in my left knee and didn't get any medical attention for eight months. It took me a year of writing grievances to finally have surgery done on my knee.

When it comes to the inhumane conditions in CYA, the list is endless. And although I'm not inclined to list every single injustice, I am willing to share my opinion on solutions to make CYA better.

The California Youth Authority needs to be destroyed before any productivity can occur. You can't build something effective on top of something rotten. After we've done that, we need to use all of the resources it took to keep CYA afloat and put them into local programs across the state. How can you teach a child how to live in his community by taking him out of his community? Lastly, follow up with these programs to make sure they're meeting the standards required to really rehabilitate their youth. It would be better for the youth, society, their communities, and even the state budget.

We've given The California Youth Authority too many chances to reform. For too long, Y.A. and its wrongdoings were hidden behind those gleaming barbed wire fences. But with two suicides in the same week, policy makers have finally seen the light. So let's shut the whole operation down now that Y.A. is no mystery.

The More I Fight, The More I Remember...

Lately, I've been on a journey
To point out the mistakes Y-A has made.
And the more I fight for this cause,
The more I remember those days.
I remember being in a cell
In one hundred degree weather.
I remember the times I spent nights
Thinking I would be locked up forever.
There were instances where I read old letters,
And cried myself to sleep.
Counting down the years, months,
And sometimes even the weeks.
I remember wanting to see my mother's face
Without her having to come to this place.
A sour taste seeped from the gates—
My grandmother's face filled with disgrace.
I now know how much they love me,
They supported me every step of the way.
They taught me to believe in myself,
Taught me to stand tall with every breath that I take.
I remember how to cook noodles,
I learned about a thousand recipes.
For if all I had was a noodle,
I wouldn't let the police get the best of me.
I remember the feeling of getting time added
To your already long sentence.
It's like getting your teeth knocked out
Right after experiencing the drill at the dentist.
I'm ready to redeem myself by being active
From January to December.
And I'll never run out of things to say,
For the more I fight, the more I remember.

There were instances where I read old letters,
And cried myself to sleep.
Counting down the years, months,
And sometimes even the weeks.

The Worst Of All Fears

All my life I've lived in fear
Afraid of failure
Afraid of failing short of succeeding
Afraid of commitment
And of obligation
And responsibility
Afraid of being abandoned
And of falling asleep alone at night
And of never waking up again

I loved in fear of growing up
And leaving home to be on my own
I lived in fear of growing old
And in fear of dying young
I even lived in fear of living forever

I lived in fear of fighting
And the thoughts of losing
I lived in fear of war
And of the threats of calm
During peace-time silences
I lived in fear of
Spending the rest of my natural life
Continued in prison
And of being released back into nowhere

I lived in fear of homelessness
And of poverty
Afraid of guilt
And afraid of shame
Afraid of my own self-consciousness
And of lust
And the outcome of others greed

But of all my fears
I'm afraid of the darkness most
And seconds before the darkness comes...
I simply close my eyes.

Blessings

Our every day
Is filled with blessings
Tho' at times
We're just not for sure

But they do exist
During the trials of our lives
And tribulations
They help us to endure

O' only if
We took the time out
And sought out our blessings
Contently each day

We'd surely discover
So many splendid things,
And wonderful people
Along the way

So don't ever give up
When all seems to fail
Because God has a plan
Just for you

And no matter what
He'll always send shining
Down blessings
For all that you do!

Dedicated To Donna Hunter

WILLIAM M. THURSTON

Questions
control

a conversation. They shape what's being talked about and influence the thoughts that are batted around. This next writer asks the best questions. But first he writes a beautiful dedication to a colleague that we're truly missing. She's moved on to teach at Stanford University and we occasionally see her, but we do miss her presence in our office. He then goes on to list some fears he has, with darkness being at the top of the list. 'Would I Truly Be Free?' is where he asks some really good questions. We think that time is the only thing that will reveal those answers, but it's always nice to inquire about our well-being, our freedom. We hope William finds the answers that make him feel comfortable with where he's headed. He writes to us from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA, and we can't wait to see that address on the return side of the envelope again.

Would I Truly Be Free?

If I were to be released from prison today
Would I really be free?
Would I really truly be free to pick and choose
Which paths I take that surround me?

Would I truly be free to come and go willingly,
And to do as I well-so please?
Would I have the freedom of choice and random
To blow free like the breeze?

Would I be free to make amends for my sins
And for all the wrongs that I've done?
Would I truly be free to participate when deciding
What's best for my son?

Would I be free to pick and choose
Who I want to befriend?
Would I be free to divorce or be celibate
Or to even marry again?

Would I be free to remain focused
No matter who I was thinking of?
Would I be free to search for romance,
Intimacy, and this thing called love?

Would I truly be free like the bird
Or even as free as the sea?
If I were right this instance
Physically released
Would I also mentally be free?

Life In General

Where is this,
This place that we've come?
The apexes and the abates
(the highs and the lows)
Of our mental and emotional states
And spiritualities

Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and
At times even physically we're either
Lost or found. And either willingly or
"against" our wills. We arrive to conclusions
and final destinations.

Is there such a thing as chance or fate?
To some those are the most
Logical of explanations; why things "are"
What they are. Why it "is" what it is
Or why they "will be" what the will

Either submissively or with certain
Degrees of resistance we'll end up
"somewhere" and we can count on that!
But if we were to set a course towards
Some specific point in our lives and
Some specific point in our lives and
Push forward, full steam ahead,
Soon enough we'll begin to see
And even experience the metamorphous
Of mental, emotional, and spiritual
Changes at levels somewhere very
Close to where we'd like to be.

VINCENT-RAY WILLIAMS

There was a time when every Beat issue had this next writer's name featured in the Piece Of The Week section. And anyone who's picked up a Beat in the last couple of years should recognize this name. We haven't heard from Vincent Williams in a long while, or at least it seems like it. We are so used to seeing him every week that now that he's gone off to N.A. Chaderjian, one of Y-As several institutions, we find ourselves missing his weekly contributions. We first met the very talented and gifted Vincent when he was detained in Alameda County Juvenile Hall (150), many years ago, and ever since then he's stolen our hearts and took us on a journey through his life. We appreciate him for that. In his first poem he writes about heartbreak and how when one is going through it, the other one probably is too. And in his second poem, 'As Real As It Gets', he describes life in jail. And as he does so, he reminds us of why we miss him so much. His honesty bleeds from his heart onto the page and we can't help but let him know, we don't want him to be a stranger. Keep us informed Vincent. It was a pleasure, as always, to hear from you.

Ice Cold Tears

A man stands alone
In the deep dark night
Trying his best to figure out
What he didn't do right
A woman walks away
Showing him her back
There's no other way
For their love has ran off the tracks
Lonely and cold
The man gives a sigh
Heart hurting so
Soul asking why?
He doesn't understand
Why she loves him not
But has the heart to say "sorry"
In the grocery store parking lot
The moon doesn't glow
It's nowhere in sight
Leaving him all alone
In the deep dark night
She's already gone
Has disappeared out of view
He takes a deep breath
Not knowing what to do
A clap of thunder
Here comes the rain
Pouring upon him

Soaking his pain
He welcomes the rain
His only true friend
That been there through ups and downs
Again and again
His feet start to move
Taking him nowhere
He really doesn't care
Just wants to get there
A thought in his mind
Where will he really go?
He'll never understand
'cause he didn't know
There was a time
When love was pure and sweet
Her in his arms
Comforting with her heat
It seems to him
Only yesterday
That for the first time
He heard her say
"I love you and will never leave"
Because baby your all
The love that I need
Feet still moving
Leading him astray
He's paying the price
'cause she wouldn't stay
For what?

After all of the time spent
She must be crazy
To forget what real love meant
He stops and stares
Oh it's not your taking
You did your part
You were not faking
A heart like hers
Will be doomed forever
How can she love you
When she doesn't have her own life
together?
He notices the rain has stopped
And finally sees the moon
Mind clear knowing where he's going
He'll be home soon
He knows where to go
The right street to take
Two blocks east
Turn by the lake
Arriving home
He opens the door
But stops when he hears a sound...
Opens a little more
Flips on the lights
And there she is
Sitting on the couch
Smiling with the kids
He opens his mouth
To tell her to leave
But all fades away
He's falling deep into nothingness
And suddenly before he hits the ground
He wake up
He rubs and blinks his eyes
Making sure he's back in reality
Rolls over, there she is
So beautiful and sleep
She must be dreaming too
Of her deepest darkest fears
Because out and down her eyes sleeping
Pour ice-cold tears...

As Real As It Gets

Look at yourself
Tell me what you see
Close your eyes
Don't look at me
Look into your minds
And tell me, in ten years, where will
you be?
Will you still be in jail
Have been graduated from CYA?
Stressing for phone calls and mail
Day after day?
Will you still be making excuses
For all of your wrongs
Crying about how the system did you
dirty
Like some tired sad song?
A song that goes on and on
Drowning all else out
For real, think about it
Is this all you're about?
Will you continue to take for granted
The simple things?
Like your freedom and family
And what life really means
I know I won't
Waste another ten years of my life
But I also understand that,
With freedom I have to do right
At times it will be difficult
I'll have a lot on my plate to do
But allowing myself to return here
I'd be a damn fool.
In my lifetime

I've been through the turns
The type that scars a person forever
Like third degree burns
Going in and out of jail
For petty, childish stupid stuff
And always trying to be hard
Just had to be tuff.
But look where it got me
Behind these locked doors
Wishing I never did
What I did before
So back to you
What do you see in your minds eye?
Do you still see yourself starring out
of a small window
Looking at the sky
Eating noodles 24/7
Always getting in fights
Do you really want to spend the rest
of your life
Arguing about your rights?
Well I don't know 'bout y'all,
But I know what I see of myself
A good father, real estate broker
With mucho wealth
No longer will I let the streets
Hold me down
Never will I fall
Back into the ground
No longer will I steal
And lie for my own gain
But will educate myself
Using my brain
No longer never again
Will I starve to get that last dollar

And risk being back here
Nope, no longer
And most of all
I'll take more hits
You put it together
This is as real as it gets
Life beholds of me what it makes
Taking no short cuts, giving no breaks
I am a son, a father, a man
To do right is to take care of business
To leave alone ignorance and childish
games
To stop living my life, going by false
names
Jail is not me
I am more than this place
Can't you tell look at
The expression on my face
So next time you consider
Doing something bad
Take a moment to think
Of all you could have had
And I'll guarantee
You'll end up mad
Angry at yourself
For taking the system-bait
Furthermore returning back
To this side of the gate
They time is precious
And so it is true
But the courage to be a man
Is purely up to you
Now open your eyes
Don't you feel better?
Maybe a little bit?

For Print (If You Wish)

The publisher was kind enough to provide me with a copy of this intriguing publication, and though I am old enough to be a parent of any or all of the contributors, I have a few comments that may be of interest to you, and hopefully this little bit of wisdom will be helpful. Please, do not take any of my comments in a negative way, but as a fellow prisoner, perhaps you will allow some latitude, and accept this as the words of someone else who's been there.

First and foremost, it's very good to see so many notes that are related to drug abuse, and regrets for damage done either to people, or to yourselves, but are you being honest with yourself? Or, are you just trying to impress some counselor that may be able to influence the length of time you have to do?

In this prison, as well as most others, there are people that attend A/A, N/A, anger management, and assorted other so called "programs", but not for any actual benefits. Instead, they choose to lie to themselves, and only want the little "star" that shows they attended. That's a sad situation, because there are some really good people here that keep lying to themselves and will eventually end up in the same situation of one person I know: He got busted with some heroin, and having failed in the past, was sentenced to three years, doubled up for previous convictions, and four one year "prison priors"...TEN YEARS, and he's got to do 80% of that before consideration for parole. The key here, is that he neglected to address the problem, and it kept coming back to bite him in the hind end.

Secondly, every human being feels more comfortable as part of a group than as an individual. There are few exceptions, but this is a pretty simple fact. One thing that kind of bothers me was all of the references that could be interpreted as "gang related". My ignorance of the local juvenile system prevents me from knowing for certain, but a group that wishes to be known as the "150 Crew" has kind of a strange connotation to it. One of the strangest things I've ever witnessed, was how desperate some people are to be included in a group, even when they know that there is no justification for some of the groups actions. Often, group identification is based on such ignorant principles that it's impossible to properly explain. Why do people insist on getting tattoos that espouse racial bigotry, their county of residence, or other transient identification features?

Perhaps the stupidest example of this I've witnessed, was by a young person who had this initials tattooed on his lower back. Normally, that wouldn't create any nightmares down the road, but it just so happened that his initials were A.B., and had them tattooed over eight inches high over his kidney area! When you consider that California has nearly an 80% recidivism rate, there's an 8-out-of-10 chance that he'll come back. But during processing, when they see those tattoos, he'll be sent to a far less pleasant prison, at a higher classification level, which essentially equates to volunteering for hell...

As you go through life, you experience both positive and negative interactions with other people. The key

GARY HALLFORD

A self-proclaimed father figure and a very wise new writer is on the prowl. He's writing from California State Prison Solano in Vacaville, CA. And he challenges us on categorizing people in a specific way. Our 150 Crew section is not a gang label at all, rather it's the young kids from Alameda County Juvenile Hall on 150th Ave. in San Leandro, CA. We just use 150 for short. But anyhow, he makes a really good point about how humans tend to let arbitrary differences influence how they deal with others. It's always a pleasure to publish new writers who actually know what they're talking about. Keep writing Gary and we'll keep publishing.

though, is to not allow arbitrary differences determine how you respond to someone else. If you let someone else's prejudice to cloud your own judgment, then you are only a follower. If, however, you choose to accept others, and not to classify people by their color, religion, national origin, sexuality, disability, or any other difference, you'll find that they all have something to offer, and you can learn from their cultural differences. Just for an odd example, if you were to classify me by these carious criteria, I'm a middle-aged white Buddhist/humanist from Colorado, and I serve as a paralegal/human rights activist and literacy tutor. My friends include black Muslims; Hispanic Christians; and people of every way of life. I refuse to let any specific differences deny either of us the opportunity to get to know each other, and learn from each other....

The bottom line is that there is a tendency in this country towards political polarity. There seems to be nobody in the middle, just those that are on the extreme edges. That only causes confusion, hatred, and bitterness. Those that refuse to learn from those around them are doomed to being ignorant of some of the most interesting people on this planet. Those that choose to blindly follow along behind ancient doctrines and arbitrary delusions are wasting an opportunity to learn profound things, and do it easily.

I wish all of you the best, and only hope that as you go through life, that you learn to question the practices and old prejudice that surround you. Part of being an adult, is taking responsibility for your actions, and if there is anything I can teach you, please take this to heart: you already know what's right and wrong. The only problem, is applying that knowledge to your daily lives. You know that drugs are destroying your neighborhoods, and the greed of trying to control drug trade gets other kids killed. You already know that it's wrong to steal, to be violent against others, and to lie.... You already know this stuff; you just have to learn how to apply what you know...

I'm an old fart (by your standards), and for the most part you don't want to listen to anything I try and tell you. I like that about you. You want to make your own decisions, and learn the hard way (kinda sounds familiar...). But in so doing, you're creating a wormhole that you may not get out of. If you do nothing else, keep reading everything you can get your hands on, and explore the outer reaches of your imagination. Though you may have dreams of being an NBA player, or a Gangsta-Rap star, your chance of winning the lottery is higher. Stick with the things that can definitely help you, and lose the stuff that will hold you back...IT'S YOUR LIFE, LIVE IT WELL.

With Love and Respect,

As you go through life, you experience both positive and negative interactions with other people.
The key though, is to not allow arbitrary differences determine how you respond to someone else.

